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ABSTRACT

The theory of transformative learning, the process of making meaning of one's experience, emerged from the work of Jack Mezirow and has been explored through numerous research studies and critiques over the last 20 years. The purpose of this monographic is to provide greater insight into the transformative learning theory. The paper begins with an overview of transformative learning theory, including Mezirow's notion of rational transformation, Robert Boyd's concept of individuation, and Paulo Freire's view of social transformation. The literature review explores seven unresolved issues: individual change versus social action, decontextualized view of learning, universal model of adult learning, adult development--shift or progression, rationality, other ways of knowing, and the model of perspective transformation. Reflective notes in each section illustrate the application of theory to the practice of fostering transformative learning. The review identifies gaps and areas of controversy in Mezirow's work as well as research findings that attempt to broaden the theory. The third section outlines the essential conditions and techniques for fostering transformative learning and roles and responsibilities of educators and learners. One appendix organizes sources in the literature relevant to specific teaching-learning techniques; a second appendix outlines the purposes and salient results of 46 research studies. The paper contains 104 references. (SK)

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The Theory and Practice of Transformative Learning:

A Critical Review

Information Series No. 374

by

Edward W. Taylor

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—interpreting the literature in the ERIC database. This paper should be of interest to adult educators and graduate students in adult education.

ERIC/ACVE would like to thank Edward W. Taylor for his work in preparing this paper. Dr. Taylor is a member of the Core Faculty of the Graduate Programs at Antioch University-Seattle. His dissertation was titled "A Learning Model of Intercultural Competency: A Transformative Process," and related papers have been published in ***Adult Education Quarterly (AEQ)***, ***International Journal of Intercultural Relations***, and ***International Education*** and presented at the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC). He serves as Consulting Editor for AEQ and was recently elected to a 2-year term on the AERC Steering Committee.

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Executive Summary

The theory of transformative learning, the process of making meaning of one's experience, emerged from the work of Jack Mezirow and has been explored through numerous research studies and critiques over the last 20 years. As this monograph demonstrates, Mezirow has been its primary spokesperson, but other models of transformative education, particulary those of Robert Boyd and Paulo Freire, have contributed to the discussion. The paper begins with an overview of transformative learning theory, including Mezirow's notion of rational transformation, Boyd's concept of individuation, and Freire's view of social transformation.

The heart of the monograph is a review of theoretical and empirical literature, including numerous unpublished doctoral dissertations, that explores seven unresolved issues: individual change versus social action, decontextualized view of learning, universal model of adult learning, adult development—shift or progression, rationality, other ways of knowing, and the model of perspective transformation. Reflective notes in each section seek to inform practitioners about the application of theory to the practice of fostering transformative learning. The review identifies gaps and areas of controversy in Mezirow's work as well as research findings that attempt to elaborate on and broaden the theory.

An important assumption of this paper is that, although the theory is much discussed, the practice of transformative learning has been minimally investigated and is inadequately defined and poorly understood. To help improve practice, the third section outlines the essential conditions and techniques for fostering transformative learning and roles and responsibilities of educators-as-facilitators and of learners in creating the environment supporting critical reflection and exploration of alternative perspectives. One appendix organizes sources in the literature relevant to specific teaching-learning techniques; a second appendix is a table detailing the purposes and salient results of 46 research studies on transformative learning.

Information on transformative learning theory may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors: Adult Development, Adult Education, *Adult Learning, *Educational Theories,

Experiential Learning, Individual Development, *Social Cognition, *World Views; and identifiers: Mezirow (Jack), *Transformative Learning, *Transformation Theory (Adult Learning). Asterisks indicate terms that are particularly relevant.

Introduction

The study of transformative learning, the process of making meaning of one's experience, is continually being investigated within the field of adult education. As a concept it emerged over 20 years ago, beginning with the original study by Jack Mezirow (1978a), who investigated the learning experience of women returning to school after a long hiatus. Since that time numerous studies have emerged exploring transformative learning in relationship to community and social transformation, intercultural learning, courage, critical reflection, whole person learning, and lifestyle and career change, to mention just a few. Presently, as an area of study, transformative learning continues to be of interest, as when it first emerged in the field. For example, at the 1997 Adult Education Research Conference in Oklahoma State University, transformative learning was the focus of more presentations than any other concept or idea discussed—over 10% of the papers presented.

Looking back over most all the work that has been written about transformative learning, two general patterns emerge. One pattern involves published papers that have tended to focus predominantly on theoretical critique centering on issues of social action, critical pedagogy, adult development, reflection, and context and rationality. The second involves over 40 unpublished empirical studies that were completed by graduate students for doctoral dissertations. Only until very recently have these studies been reviewed[1] (Taylor 1997a). From this recent review emerges a supportive, but critical picture of transformative learning theory. It reveals a learning process that needs to recognize to a greater degree the significant influence of context, the varying nature of the catalyst of the process, the minimization of the role of critical reflection and increased role of other ways of knowing and relationships, and an overall broadening of the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation. Furthermore, and significant to this monograph, there has been (until very recently) only minimal investigation into the practice of fostering transformative learning. More specifically, the review found the practice for fostering transformative learning ideally conceptualized, theoretically based, and offering little support from empirical research or practical experience. Adult educators are

[1] Significant portions of Taylor's (1997a) review of the empirical studies of transformative learning are included in this monograph, with the addition of six recent studies.

being encouraged to practice a particular approach to teaching toward an outcome (perspective transformation) and with a process that is inadequately defined and poorly understood, particularly in the context of the classroom experience. Also, when identifying these ideal learning conditions, most authors of these studies, as well as Mezirow himself, underemphasize the practical implications associated with facilitating and encouraging learners to revise their meaning perspectives.

What is needed at this point is an update of what is presently known about the theory and practice of transformative learning theory. This involves developing a discussion of both the theoretical critiques and empirical studies. It means asking What do these two bodies of literature reveal together? What themes or patterns emerge about the nature of transformative learning as we presently understand it? What are the unresolved issues? It also involves looking at what is presently known about the practice of fostering transformative learning—transformative pedagogy. What underlying assumptions, values, beliefs about teaching and learning does it rest upon? What tools and methodologies do educators draw upon to be successful? What processes evolve as one practices transformative pedagogy? What risks and challenges are associated with the practice of transformative pedagogy?

This brings us to the purpose of this monograph: to provide greater insight into the transformative learning theory. To accomplish this task I believe it is best to bring together in one place all the major articles, studies, and critiques concerning transformative learning theory. My hope is that by merging the theoretical with the empirical we can come to better understand transformative learning theory and its related practices. I begin with a brief overview of transformative learning theory from the work of Jack Mezirow, followed by two alternative perspectives of transformative learning that have helped shape its present form. This sets the stage for a discussion of the various unresolved issues (e.g., individual vs. social change, context, universalism, adult development, rationality, other ways of knowing, and the model and outcome of a perspective transformation) associated with transformative learning theory and how they shape and influence its related practice. These issues are discussed for the first time in concert with not only the theoretical critiques, but also with the related empirical studies. (Appendix B offers a brief synopsis of all the empirical studies covered for those who have additional interest in a particular study.) These first two sections (overview and unresolved issues) set the backdrop for the third section, which explores the practices of transformative

pedagogy. This final section attempts to explain transformative pedagogy by looking at several studies in depth, revealing the essential conditions and challenges associated with fostering transformative learning. It is important to note that this monograph focuses almost exclusively on empirical studies and critiques of transformative learning theory by Jack Mezirow, making a particular point not to include conceptual literature that does not directly inform this review.

My hope is that this monograph will appeal to a wide audience of adult educators, with each section offering something for those interested in transformative learning. Those who want an introductory perspective on transformative learning can peruse the first section. Researchers who wants to review other studies and get updated on the latest research can turn to the second section. And those who are interested in challenges of fostering of transformative learning (transformative pedagogy) should explore the third and final section.

Transformative Learning Theory—An Overview

This section of the monograph provides a brief overview of transformative learning theory from the perspective of Jack Mezirow. Also discussed are the conditions that need to be present, from his perspective, to foster transformative learning. Its intent is to provide a synthesis of its major premises, not an exhaustive discussion, that includes enough information from which to understand the implications and insights gained from discussing the various unresolved issues about transformative learning theory. This overview is followed by two alternative perspectives of transformative learning: Boyd's (transformative education) and Freire's (social transformation) that contribute to our understanding of transformative pedagogy.

Mezirow: A Rational Transformation

Transformative learning offers a theory of learning that is uniquely adult, abstract, idealized, and grounded in the nature of human communication. It is a theory that is partly a developmental process, but more as "learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow 1996, p. 162). Transformative learning offers an explanation for change in meaning structures that evolves in two domains of learning based on the epistemology of Habermas' communicative theory. First is *instrumental* learning, which focuses on learning through task-oriented problem solving and determination of cause and effect relationships—learning to do, based on empirical-analytic discovery. Second is *communicative* learning, which is learning involved in understanding the meaning of what others "communicate concerning values, ideals, feelings, moral decisions, and such concepts as freedom, justice, love, labor, autonomy, commitment and democracy" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 8). When these domains of learning involve "reflective assessment of premises . . . [and] of movement through cognitive structures by identifying and

judging presuppositions" (p. 5), transformative learning is taking place. Transformative learning attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences. It is the revision of meaning structures from experiences that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation.

"Transformative learning attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences."

Perspective transformation explains the process of how adults revise their meaning structures. Meaning structures act as culturally defined frames of reference that are inclusive of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. *Meaning schemes*, the smaller components, are "made up of specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience" (Mezirow 1991a, pp. 5-6). They are the tangible signs of our habits and expectations that influence and shape a particular behavior or view, such as how we may act when we are around a homeless person or think of a Republican or Democrat. Changes in our meanings schemes are a regular and frequent occurrence. *Meaning perspective* is a general frame of reference, world view, or personal paradigm involving "a collection of meaning schemes made up of higher-order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations and evaluations" (Mezirow 1990, p. 2) and "they provide us criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, bad and good, beautiful and ugly, true and false, appropriate and inappropriate" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 44). Our frame of reference is composed of two dimensions, habits of mind and a point of view. "Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set" of cultural, political, social educational, and economic codes (Mezirow 1997, pp. 5-6). The habits of mind get expressed in a particular point of view: "the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation" (p. 6).

Meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialization and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents, and mentors. They "mirror the way our culture and those individuals responsible for our socialization happen to have defined various situations" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 131). Over time, in conjunction with numerous congruent experiences, these perspectives become more ingrained into our psyche and changing them is less frequent. In essence, they provide a rationalization for an often irrational world, and we become dependent upon them. These meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives but at the same time they are a reflection of our

cultural and psychological assumptions. These assumptions constrain us, making our view of the world subjective, often distorting our thoughts and perceptions. They are like a "double-edged sword" whereby they give meaning (validation) to our experiences, but at the same time skew our reality.

Meaning perspectives operate as perceptual filters that organize the meaning of our experiences. When we come upon a new experience, our meaning perspectives act as a sieve through which each new experience is interpreted and given meaning. As the new experience is assimilated into these structures, it either reinforces the perspective or gradually stretches its boundaries, depending on the degree of congruency. However, when a radically different and incongruent experience cannot be assimilated into the meaning perspective, it is either rejected or the meaning perspective is transformed to accommodate the new experience. A transformed meaning perspective is the development of a new meaning structure. This development is usually the result of a disorienting dilemma due to a disparate experience in conjunction with a critical reappraisal of previous assumptions and presuppositions. It is this change in our meaning perspectives that is at the heart of Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation—a world view shift. A perspective transformation is "a more fully developed (more functional) frame of reference . . . one that is more (a) inclusive, (b) differentiating, (c) permeable, (d) critically reflective, and (e) integrative of experience" (Mezirow 1996, p. 163). Although less common it can occur either through a series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes or as a result of an acute personal or social crisis, for example, a death of a significant other, divorce, a natural disaster, a debilitating accident, war, job loss, or retirement. Often these experiences are stressful and painful and can threaten the very core of one's existence (Mezirow 1997). A perspective transformation can be better understood by referring to an example given by a participant in a recent study on transformative learning, describing his revised world view. The participant, Lobo, an American, describes his change in perspective in response to living in Honduras for 2 years as a Peace Corps volunteer:

> I definitely see the world in a whole different light than how I looked at the world before I left. Before I left the states there was another world out there. I knew it existed, but I didn't see what my connection to it was at all. You hear news reports going on in other countries, but I didn't understand how and what we did here in the States impacted on these people in Honduras, in South America, Africa, and Asia. Since I did not have a feeling for how our

> lives impacted their lives it was as if the U.S. were almost a self-contained little world. After going to Honduras I realized how much things we did in the States affected Hondurans, Costa Ricans. How we affected everyone else in the world. I no longer had this feeling the U.S. was here and everybody else was outside. I felt that the world definitely got much smaller. It got smaller in the sense of throwing a rock in the water creates ripples. I am that rock and the things I do here in the States affect people everywhere. I feel much more a part of the world than I do of the U.S. I criticize the U.S. much more now than I would have in the past. (Taylor 1993, p. 175)

Mezirow has identified 10 phases of perspective transformation based on a national study of women returning to college who participated in an academic reentry program after a long hiatus from school. The study involved in-depth interviews of 83 women from 12 programs in Washington, California, New York, and New Jersey (Mezirow 1978a,b). From the data, he inductively identified the following phases (Mezirow 1995, p. 50):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

"Three common themes of Mezirow's theory are the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse in the process of meaning structure transformation."

Three common themes of Mezirow's theory are the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse in the process of meaning structure transformation. It is the learner's experience that is the starting point and the subject matter for transformative learning (Mezirow 1995). Experience is seen as socially constructed, so that it can be deconstructed and acted upon. It is experience that provides the grist for critical reflection. Tennant (1991) offers a description of using a learner's experience that seems most congruent with transformative learning:

> [Shared] learning experiences establish a common base from which each learner constructs meaning through personal reflection and group discussion....The meanings that learners attach to their experiences may be subjected to critical scrutiny. The teacher may consciously try to disrupt the learner's world view and stimulate uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt in learners about previously taken-for-granted interpretations of experience. (p. 197)

The second theme, critical reflection, based on Habermas' view of rationality and analysis, is considered by Mezirow the distinguishing characteristic of adult learning. Only in adulthood does one become aware of the "uncritically assimilated half-truths of conventional wisdom and power relationships . . . [and] come to recognize being caught in his/her own history and reliving it" (Mezirow 1981, p. 11). Critical reflection refers to questioning the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. It often occurs in response to an awareness of a contradiction among our thoughts, feelings, and actions. These contradictions are generally the result of distorted epistemic (nature and use of knowledge), psychological (acting inconsistently from our self-concept), and sociolinguistic (mechanisms by which society and language limit our perception) assumptions. In essence, we realize something is not consistent with what we hold to be true and act in relation to our world. "Reflection is the apperceptive process by which we change our minds, literally and figuratively. It is the process of turning our attention to the justification for what we know, feel, believe and act upon" (Mezirow 1995, p. 46).

In the case of transformative learning, most significant to effecting change in one's established frame of reference (world view) is the critical reflection of assumptions (CRA). This is a critique of assumptions (e.g., habits of mind based on logical, ethical, idological, social, economic, political, ecological, or spritual aspects of experience) underlying a problem defined by a learner. Mezirow (1998) breaks critical reflection into a taxonomy: (1) critical reflection of assumptions (CRA), which focuses more on instrumental learning (e.g., critiquing a text) through objective reframing with the intent to improve performance; and (2) critical self-reflection of assumptions (CSRA), subjective reframing, which focuses on the psychological and cultural limitations of one's world view. It is through CSRA that we are freed from cultural distortions and constraints, allowing for open discourse. Therefore, it is critical self-reflection of assumptions (CSRA) that is most essential for the transforming of our meaning structures—a perspective transformation. A good example of how critical reflection can bring to light contradictions

in our practice emerges from an investigation of a teacher's study group (Saavedra 1995). Elizabeth, the group facilitator, shares her reflections on why teachers do what they do:

> I realized at one point in my career that I actually have theories. I had never realized that before. . . . There were instances where I was actually teaching based on the intuitions or theories that I had developed. Um, but there were times that I was just teaching completely uninformed, I was just adopting the theories that the publishers, or whoever, whatever materials I was using, had built into those, those materials. And, so throughout the day I was giving contradictory messages. I'm telling kids "I want you to write, and I want you to become writers and I want you to become creative writers." And the next minute I'm teaching them skills in isolation acting as though children couldn't write unless they learned them and so I've canceled out what I've done . . . . We think we are helping kids to develop writing, but we're not. We think we're pushing them, and it's because we haven't really thought through our theories, and we just kinda adopt activities and strategies. . . . (pp. 301-303)

The third theme of transformative learning theory is rational discourse. Rational discourse is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed. However, in contrast to everyday discussions, it is used "when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness, (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement." (Mezirow 1991a, p. 77). Discourse in transformative learning rest on the following assumptions:

- It is rational only as long it meets the conditions necessary to create understanding with another;
- It is to be driven by objectivity;
- All actions and statements are open to question and discussion;
- Understanding is arrived through the weighing of evidence and measuring the insight and strength of supporting arguments; and
- The primary goal is to promote mutual understanding among others.

It is within the arena of rational discourse that experience and critical reflection are played out. Discourse becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action, where experience is reflected upon and assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and

where meaning schemes and meaning structures are ultimately transformed.

Perspective transformation provides a model of adult learning by explaining the process of how personal paradigms evolve and expand in adulthood. In essence, it offers an explanation for adult development, that of developing a greater adaptive capacity to capitalize and act on prior knowledge and experience through critical reflection. "Anything that moves the individual towards a more inclusive, differentiated permeable (open to other points of view), and integrated meaning perspective, the validity of which has been established through rational discourse, aids an adult's development" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 7). Transformative learning, according to Mezirow, reflects a process as well as an outcome of adult development. It is a process where meaning making becomes continually more clarified although it doesn't have to follow clearly defined steps or stages. An example can be seen in the development of critical reflection, where Elias (1997) describes the transformation of mental capacities associated with cognitive development in response to and working through the mental exigencies of modern life:

> First is the development of a "conscious I" capable of exercising critical reflection. Second is a transformed capacity for thinking, transformed to be more dialectical or systemic, thinking (for example) that perceives polarities as mutually creative resources rather than as exclusive and competitive options and that perceives archetypes as partners for inner dialogue. Third is the capacity to be a conscious creative force in the world, as expressed, for example, as the capacity to intervene in and transform the quality of discourse in a group or learning community. (pp. 3-4)

Mezirow also sees development as an outcome of the transformative learning process, such "that it is irreversible once completed; that is, once our understandings clarified and we have committed ourselves fully to taking the action it suggests, we do not regress to levels of less understanding" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 152). Furthermore, that outcome of the developmental process is a more inclusive and discriminating world view.

Essential to promoting adult development is the practice of fostering transformative learning. Fostering transformative learning includes the most significant learning in adulthood, that of communicative learning. "Communicative learning involves identifying problematic ideas, values, beliefs, and feelings, critically examining

the assumptions upon which they are based, testing their justification through rational discourse and making decisions predicated upon the resulting consensus" (Mezirow 1995, p. 58). Mezirow believes that this is the central activity to be fostered by adult educators. Essential to successful fostering of communicative (transformative) learning is promotion of ideal conditions for rational discourse. The conditions include the following:

> (a) have accurate and complete information; (b) be free from coercion and distorting self-deception; (c) be able to weigh evidence and assess arguments as objectively as possible; (d) be open to alternative perspectives; (e) be able to critically reflect upon presuppositions and their consequences; (f) have equal opportunity to (including the opportunity to challenge) question, refute, and reflect and to hear others do the same; and (g) be able to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity. (Mezirow 1996, p. 171)

It is also important to note that the conditions operate under the supposition that the adult educator will make every effort to establish standards within the classroom that significantly reduce the influence of power, the deficit model associated with instrumental learning, and win-lose discourse.

In conclusion, Mezirow does not see transformative learning as an "add-on" educational practice or technique. He sees it as the very essence of adult education, such that the goal of adult education is "to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purpose rather than uncritically acting on those of others" (Mezirow 1997, p. 11). This perspective rests on the belief that there is inherent purpose, logic, and ideal associated with transformative learning theory. Significant learning involves the transformation of meaning structures through an ongoing process of critical reflection, discourse, and acting on one's beliefs. It is the very logic that provides the rationale for educators to choose the best of practices for fostering transformative learning.

Alternative Perspectives of Transformative Learning

There is always some danger in recognizing just one theorist as the major contributor to the development of a particular concept or idea. In transformative learning, Mezirow has been the primary spokesperson and writer, having written two books and many

published articles on the topic of transformative learning over the last 20 years. Furthermore, most of the theoretical critiques and empirical studies have been in response to and framed by his work concerning transformative learning. However, it is important to note that other models of transformative education have contributed to this discussion as well, and need to be given some attention. More specifically, this means discussing briefly the work of Robert Boyd (Boyd 1991; Boyd and Myers 1988), who offers a model of transformative education based on analytical psychology, and Paulo Freire, who offers an emancipatory model of transformation. The intent is not only to recognize their contribution but, more important, to recognize how these different perspectives of transformative learning along with Mezirow's are shaped by their underlying assumptions about learning, self, and society. It is these underlying assumptions as well as their own, that adult educators need to become aware of in order to become effective practitioners of transformative pedagogy.

Robert Boyd: Transformation as Individuation

Boyd's model of transformation is grounded in the analytical (depth) psychology work of Carl Jung explored within the context of small group behavior. It is an inner journey of individuation, that lifelong process of coming to understand through reflection the psychic structures (ego, shadow, persona, collective unconscious, etc.) that make up one's identity. Individuation involves the discovery of new talents, a sense of empowerment and confidence, a deeper understanding of one's inner self, and greater sense of self-responsibility (Boyd 1991). Transformation for Boyd is defined as "a fundamental change in one's personality involving conjointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration" (Boyd 1989, p. 459). Only through a transformation can significant changes occur in individual psychosocial development. The central purpose of a perspective transformation is to free the individual from his or her unconscious content and reified cultural norms and patterns that constrain the potential for self-actualization. He delineates a difference between transformative education (Boyd's term) and Mezirow's perspective transformation in several ways. Boyd's transformation is much more about coming to terms with the first half of one's life and a meaningful integration with the second half. In contrast to Mezirow, who focuses on cognitive conflicts experienced by the individual's relationship with culture, Boyd is much more focused on conflicts within the individual's psyche and the resolution among these entities that leads to a transformation.

Analytical psychology, in contrast to Mezirow's view of the ego as the central psychic player in eliciting one's perspective transformation, recognizes the role of the whole person, the Self as the total personality, inclusive of the ego as well as the collective unconscious in the transformative process (Boyd and Myers 1988). It offers a framework for exploring a perspective transformation beyond an ego-centered definition and the narrow confines of acquiring a greater sense of reason and logic to a more social-psychic definition. This is demonstrated in a study of how HIV-positive adults make sense of their lives (Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves 1998). The researchers found the participants' new perspective of making meaning of their HIV experience involved "making a contribution, experiencing a heightened sensitivity to life and people, and being of service" (p. 80).

Another study that illustrates this difference is Scott's (1991a,b) research on the transformative experiences of community organizers. She takes Boyd's concept of psychic development even further and found some of her participants experiencing structural change in the realm of a spiritual descent beyond the personal ego-centered (egoic) stages of development. "When one transcends his/her ego, collective needs, wants and desires represent a stronger force . . .[and the] group can serve to represent symbolically alternative thoughts, structure, directions, and images for what is appropriate in today's society" (p. 240). From the view of analytical psychology, a perspective transformation as Mezirow defines it stops at the personal level (egoic), which lies below the transpersonal level where "the individual's cognitive and perceptual capacities apparently become so pluralistic and universal that they begin to 'reach beyond' any narrowly personal or individual perspectives or concerns" (Wilbur 1986, p. 72). In essence, instead of becoming more autonomous as Mezirow purports, the individual develops a greater interdependent relationship with and compassion for society.

Several other studies, even though it was not their intent, seem to provide insight into a perspective transformation beyond an ego-centered definition. They reveal definitions inclusive of spirituality, a transpersonal realm of development (Cochrane 1981; Hunter 1980; Scott 1991a; Sveinunggaard 1993; Van Nostrand 1992), compassion for others (Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves 1996, 1998; First and Way 1995; Gehrels 1984), and a new connectedness with others (Gehrels 1984; Laswell 1994; Weisberger 1995).

The process of transformative education is quite different as well. Boyd sees the transformative journey not as a series of rational

problem-solving practices dependent on critical reflection, but as a process of discernment. Discernment is a holistic orientation leading to contemplative insight, personal understanding of seeing life in a relational wholeness. It is indicative of three distinct activities: receptivity (listening), recognition (recognizing the need to choose), and grieving (self-talk and emotional crisis). "As radically distinguished from Mezirow's occasional reference to an individual's feelings of discomfort and disorientation, transformative education identifies grieving as a critical condition for the possibility of a personal transformation" (Boyd and Myers 1988, p. 280). Grieving, "a significant loss, a loss of a loved one, of a place, of a time, or of a way of making meaning that worked in the past," is the most integral to transformative learning (Scott 1997, p. 45). The process is intensely personal and extrarational, focusing on the internal and subjective experience, with an emphasis on open dialogue with the Self.

Concerning the fostering of transformative education Boyd sees its purpose as helping students come to recognize their "spirit"—"that abiding within the person is a truth, a knowledge, which is not separate from socio-economic, political, and other cultural influences, but transcends them" (Boyd and Myers 1988, p. 282). The adult educator is encouraged to practice two virtues, each one designed to arouse the spiritual energy necessary for self-reflection in learning throughout life. The first virtue, seasoned guidance, is that of an experienced mentor reflecting on their own journey with the intent to help guide others. The second virtue is compassionate criticisms, assisting students in questioning their own reality, facilitating the process of discernment, which ultimately reveals the present and creates a path for the future (Boyd and Myers 1988).

In closing, it is important to remember that Boyd's view of transformative education is informed by depth psychology—exploring the role of the unconscious. (Dirkx, Cunningham, Hart, Mezirow, and Scott 1993). It is through dialogue with the unconscious that transformation, individuation, is possible. Individuation is not the same as Mezirow's rational autonomous perspective; instead it is a transformation that involves coming to terms with hidden or latent aspects of one's personality, a movement from the personal ,where ego consciousness is dominant (Mezirow's perspective), to the transpersonal where "the ego is a servant of the spirit" (Washburn 1988, p. 55). Failing to come to terms with the self, the rational side of human nature is vulnerable to the forces of the unconscious, unable to act on a new perspective.

Paulo Freire: An Emancipatory Transformation

Paulo Freire (1970) was a radical educational reformist from Brazil (Latin America), who portrayed a practical and theoretical approach to emancipation through education. His work is based on his involvement with teaching people who had limited literacy skills in the Third World, where he used an educational method that was such a threat to those in power he was exiled from Brazil in 1959. Freire wanted people to develop an "ontological vocation" (p. 12); a theory of existence, which views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live. This transformation, or unveiling of reality, is an ongoing, never ending, and dynamic process. Unlike Mezirow's personal transformation, Freire is much more concerned about a social transformation via the unveiling or demythologizing of reality by the oppressed through the awakening of their critical consciousness, where they "...[learn] to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 19, translator note). This awakening or kindling of one's critical consciousness is the consequence of his educational process. In Freire's (1970) words:

> [The] more radical he [sic] is, the more fully he enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he can better transform it. He is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. He is not afraid to meet the people or enter into dialogue with them. He does not consider himself the proprietor of history or of men [sic], or the liberator of the oppressed; but he does commit himself, within history, to fight at their side. (pp. 23-25)

The latter quotation reflects most accurately the intent of his work, that of fostering an emancipatory transformative process. The process is *conscientizaçao* or conscientization (Freire 1970), whereby the oppressed learn to realize the sociopolitical and economic contradictions in their world and take action against its oppressive elements. It is "the ability to exist in and with the world; i.e., a critical consciousness of what is happening in the world" (Scott 1996, p. 345). For Freire education is never neutral: "It either domesticates by imparting the values of the dominant group so that learners assume things are right the way they are, or liberates, allowing people to critically reflect upon their world and take action to change society towards a more equitable and just vision" (Merriam and Caffarella 1998, p. 9).

Like Mezirow, Freire sees critical reflection as central to transformation in context to problem-posing and dialogue with other learners. However, in contrast, Freire sees its purpose based on a rediscovery of power such that the more critically aware learners become the more they are able to transform society and subsequently their own reality. "Mezirow stops short of this view. Personal transformation is in Mezirow's view, in and by itself, sufficient. This is why he can link himself conceptually to Freire (conscientization is critical reflection), but draws back at the concept of praxis" (Cunningham 1992, p. 185). For Mezirow, a transformation is first and foremost a personal experience (confronting epistemic and psychological distorted assumptions) that empowers persons to reintegrate (not questioning the dominant assumptions) or act on the world (confronting sociolinquistic distorted assumptions), if they choose. Similar to Mezirow, Boyd's view of transformation reflects a psychological reintegration, "old patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, which previously prevented growth, have finally been discarded" (Boyd and Myers 1988, p. 279). However, for Freire it is clearly a social experience: by the very act of transformation, society is transformed. There are only two ways for humans to relate to the world, that of integration and adaptation. Integration involves the critical capacity to act on the world as a Subject and adaptation is an Object, acted upon by the world.

Three broad concepts/methods, some of which are the most often alluded to by other educators and scholars, reflect his basic beliefs and practices about fostering an emancipatory transformation. First is his illumination of the domesticating effect of traditional education by teachers in their narrative "bank deposit" approach to teaching. Freire (1970) states that "education . . . becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes 'deposits' which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p. 58). It is as if the teacher is giving a gift of knowledge to the student, as if the student has nothing to contribute in return. Since the "banking" approach to adult education will not induce students (the oppressed) to reflect critically on their reality, he proposes a liberating education couched in "acts of cognition not in the transferal of information" (p. 67), a "problem-posing" (p. 70), and dialogical methodology.

A second concept that is at the core of this problem-posing approach of education is that of praxis. Praxis is the moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world. The idea of reflection is the continual search for new levels of

interpretations with a new set of questions with the intent to critique former questions. Action happens in concert with reflection; it is a process of continually looking over our shoulders at how our actions are affecting the world (Scott 1996). Furthermore, praxis is always framed within the context of dialogue as social process with the objective of "dismantling oppressive structures and mechanisms prevalent both in education and society" (Freire and Macedo 1995, p. 383).

Third is Freire's (1970) horizontal student-teacher relationship. This concept of the teacher working on an equal footing with the student seems couched in the Rogerian ideology, whereby the student-teacher dialogue is built upon a foundation of "love, humility, and faith...of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence" (pp. 79-80). This offers an educational atmosphere that is safe, where anything can be shared and talked about, an obvious setting for raising one's consciousness and facilitating an emancipatory transformation.

Freire's philosophy of education reflects an emancipatory perspective inherent of both a personal and social transformation of which neither can be separated. It is the combination of both the biography of the personal and that of the social that sets the stage for emancipation. "Transformational learning occurs when one grasps with growing insight the way biography [persona] intersects with the social structure, and the privilege and oppression of persons based on power" (Dirkx, Cunningham, Hart, Mezirow, and Scott 1993, p. 358). Furthermore, it is through the practice of critical reflection, problem-posing, and dialogue that transformative learning is fostered— accomplishing its primary objective of democratizing our social world.

Conclusion

The intent of providing alternative perspectives to transformative learning is not only to recognize others who contributed to the conception of transformative learning, but also to offer a broader viewpoint about the relationship among education and personal and social change. By exploring these different interpretations Mezirow's various theoretical premises becomes less amorphous and more concrete. He seems to sit in the middle between two models of change, one that emphasizes change associated with coming to terms with the Self and the other that emphasizes change associated with coming to terms with Self in relationship

to society. He tends to avoid or gives minimal attention to the deep analytical challenges associated with personal transformation, such as its inherent emotive nature, the emphasis on personal self-awareness, and the need to resolve past life issues. On the other hand he also sees transformation occurring in and out of a social action context, such that political action is a new choice associated with, but not necessarily a direct consequence of a more inclusive discriminating world view. It is Mezirow's middle-of-the-road position that provides "grist for the mill" in the next section of the monograph—that of exploring the unresolved theoretical and empirical issues of transformative learning theory.

A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Literature—Unresolved Issues

Since 1978 the theory of transformative learning, as defined by Jack Mezirow (1978a,b; 1981; 1989; 1990; 1991a,b; 1992; 1994a,b; 1995; 1996, 1997), has stimulated much discussion and analysis in the field of adult education. This scrutiny has generally manifested itself in two forms, that of theoretical critique and empirical study. Unfortunately, most of the published discussion of Mezirow's work has been predominantly theoretical critiques and the empirical studies have been generally available only as dissertations or conference proceedings (Taylor 1995; 1997a). Furthermore, most of the empirical studies focus on the model and the inherent components of a perspective transformation, whereas the theoretical critiques center on issues related to transformative learning underlying constructs about learning. Rarely have these two forms of inquiry been explored in concert with each other, reflecting on how each together informs our understanding the nature of transformative learning. It is the intent of this section of the monograph to do just that, identify and discuss the major theoretical and empirical tensions associated with transformative learning theory. More specifically, seven areas of contention emerge from the literature:

- Individual change vs. social action
- Decontextualized view of learning
- Universal model of adult learning
- Adult development: shift or progression
- An emphasis on rationality
- Other ways of knowing
- Perspective transformation: the model

Before beginning this section it is important to understand how the studies were selected for this review and their overall strengths and limitations. Over 44 studies were selected, each of them focusing on Mezirow's transformative learning theory directly (for a more in-depth explanation of selection criteria refer to Taylor 1997a). This purposeful sample of studies allowed for a more consistent interpretation, whereby all the studies were critiqued within a shared framework. The strengths of these studies are (1) the large number that have been brought together in this monograph and the consistency of their findings about the issues identified; and (2) the predominance of dissertations, which generally involve a rigorous review by a committee of experienced colleagues. On the other hand there are limitations: (1) they are predominantly qualitative, limiting their generalizability; (2) most were carried out in retrospect, where participants reflected back on their transformative experience, as opposed to observing and recording the learning experience as it was actually happening; and (3) most failed to review previous studies involving transformative learning theory, offering little critique of each other's work. Regardless of their strengths or weakness, these studies move the discussion of transformative learning theory to a new level, that of the empirical in conjunction with the theoretical, offering not a finality to the discussion, but a new perspective and a more in-depth understanding about a profound movement in the study of adult learning.

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The most controversial issue concerning transformative learning theory has been its relationship to social action and power.

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In this section the first issues discussed focus predominantly on the theoretical framework of transformative learning theory whereas later the focus is specifically on unresolved issues associated with the model of a perspective transformation. Also, each section is followed by a collection of reflective notes and questions with the intent to situate the theoretical in the practical. My hope is that, with an identification of unresolved issues, the practitioner of transformative pedagogy will be better informed about the underlying assumptions of transformative learning theory and how they can be explored within the context of fostering transformative learning.

Individual vs. Social Change

The most controversial issue concerning transformative learning theory has been its relationship to social action and power (Collard and Law 1989; Cunningham 1992; Griffin 1987; Hart 1990; Newman 1993, 1994). Much of the problem begins with Mezirow's attempt to fuse transformative learning with the epistemology of

Habermas' critical learning theory. In particular, it is the emphasis on social change framed within Habermas' epistemology of emancipatory knowing, that of knowledge derived from humankind's desire to achieve emancipation from domination. However, Collard and Law (1989) see it as "the lack of a coherent, comprehensive theory of social change, a lack diffused throughout the internal structure of this theory, evident in his selective interpretation and adaptation of Habermas, and partially dependent on problems within Habermas' own work" (p. 102). More specifically, it is the emphasis on transformation of the individual within the context of social action. "Perspective transformation appears to focus on the individual examining her or his own personal experience . . . about understanding and changing oneself . . . [and accepting] a reintegration by the individual into a society where the dominant ideology may go unquestioned"(Newman 1993, p. 229). This emphasis allows for a greater detachment from the inherent political and social action associated with emancipatory education. Furthermore, it seems that Mezirow is attempting to locate emancipatory education within the context of a liberal democratic system, thus not recognizing the sociopolitical critique from which emancipatory education was given birth. It is "his failure to address adequately questions of context, ideology, and the radical needs embodied in popular struggles [that] denies perspective transformation the power of emancipatory theory" (Collard and Law 1989, pp. 105-106). Furthermore, in Coffman's (1989, 1991) study on the promotion of inclusive language and perspective transformation among seminary students, she found that Mezirow "does not adequately accommodate the possibility of the transformation of society based on the perspective transformation of individuals who are members of a group" (1991, p. 52). It is the transformation within a group context that gives individuals more courage to initiate social change within new communities.

In response, Mezirow (1989) believes that the choice of social action resides with the learner. It is dependent upon whether the distortions that are being critically reflected upon are of an individual or sociocultural nature and it is not that he fails to recognize collective and social transformation, but instead, sees it as a separate entity from individual transformation. "Transformative learning is profoundly intersubjective, but it is not exclusively group mediated" (p. 173). It is through focusing exclusively on sociocultural distortions that Mezirow is most critical. Furthermore, he believes it is important to recognize the variety of situations where transformative learning can take place outside the context of social action:

> There can be no simple linear relationship between transformative learning and social action; there are many kinds of transformative learning and many kinds of social action. Transformative learning experiences which result in changes that are epistemic and psychic may not logically lead to collective action at all and may only very indirectly be a product of a specific social practice or institutionalized ideology. (Mezirow 1989, p. 174)

Tennant (1993) supports Mezirow, because he believes "his theory is directed at the intersection of the individual and social" (p. 36), not just the individual as others advocate. He states that a perspective transformation is a change in perspective of the individual, not society, such that it "shifts the onus for social analysis onto the learner, so that it is grounded in the learner's experience, rather than being a decontextualized theory of society generated by, and for, academe" (p. 37). However, Tennant does concur that Mezirow does not give enough attention to the influence of social forces and how they shape our lives, particularly concerning the social dimension of adult development.

Embedded in this issue of social dimension and transformative learning is a related force Mezirow overlooks, that of power. Hart (1990) is critical of transformative learning's association with emancipatory education, in particular how Mezirow's treatment of Habermas' categories of learning (e.g., instrumental, communicative) "severs the systematic and intrinsic relationship of Habermas' theory with a critique of power" (p. 126). She believes that Mezirow implies a power-free form of communication, and by doing so, fails to recognize the inherent distorting effect of power within communication that has to be addressed for critical reflection to take place. By framing his theory within Habermas' learning domains, Mezirow takes on their conceptual baggage. "Whether he likes it or not, by employing these categories Mezirow takes over their meanings and connotations as well and therefore inevitably gets tangled up with the issue of power" (p. 128). It is Mezirow's failure to recognize the power relations inherent in communication in conjunction with an educator that he places outside of a power-bound context that contradicts the practicality of transformative learning theory.

Mezirow does not respond formally to Hart, but in his later work he begins to recognize the distorted effect of power in communication, particularly in area of rational discourse. For example, he states that "there is no question of the claim that dialogue is often made impossible in a society structured by power and inequality and that

creating a forum in which participants have the right to speak is inadequate." (Mezirow 1995, p. 55). However, despite those challenges he does not believe they have to be eliminated for dialogue to lead to greater understanding, cooperation, tolerance, and respect. Instead of focusing on factors (e.g., power) that distort communication, he emphasizes the "ideals" of fostering rational discourse, because they provide a goal toward which we can strive and set a standard against which to evaluate our performance.

Reflective Notes

The latter critiques shed light on the consequences of Mezirow using Habermas' work as a theoretical lens. He wants to situate transformative learning within an emancipatory framework, but at the same time his model seems to emphasize personal transformation to a greater extent than social transformation. This is not to say that he doesn't encourage the critical reflection of epistemic or sociolinguistic assumptions. However, he believes that not all transformations need lead to or involve social critique. Furthermore, he tends to focus on the ideal, overlooking the powerful social forces that can influence the fostering of transformative learning. I believe that this discussion is tremendously important to understanding the implications of practicing transformative pedagogy. Educators need to reflect on their own values about education and ask themselves what is the role of education—personal or social change? Can they be separated? Can we separate personal transformation from social critique? Can we teach in such way that focuses on just the personal without focusing on the social dimension of learning? Should social change take precedence over the personal and who should decide?

Decontextualized View of Learning

A second unresolved issue with transformative learning theory has been its decontextualized view of adult learning and rational discourse (Clark and Wilson 1991). More specifically, in Mezirow's original research of women returning to school after a long hiatus, their "experiences were studied as if they stood apart from their historical and sociocultural context, thereby limiting our understanding of the full meaning of those experiences" (p. 78). Context

reflects the personal and sociocultural factors that play an influencing role in the process of transformative learning. Broadly speaking, these factors include the surroundings of the immediate learning event, made up of the personal and professional situation of the individual at that time and the more distant background context involving the familial and social history that has influenced the individual growing up (Clark 1991, 1992; Sveinunggaard 1993). Furthermore, in his decontextualization of rational discourse, he does not recognize its subjective nature framed within ongoing social, cultural, and historical conditions. As mentioned earlier, there is an imbalance in the theory, with too great an emphasis on the individual dimension and not enough on the social dimension:

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Context reflects the personal and sociocultural factors that play an influencing role in the process of transformative learning.

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> Essentially Mezirow has attempted to remove the very element which brings meaning to experience. The theory itself, locating perspective transformation within the individual and predicated upon humanistic assumptions of a decisive, unified self, fails to explore the constitutive relationship between individuals and sociocultural, political, and historical contexts in which they are situated. Further, Mezirow proposes . . . a concept of rationality that is essentially ahistorical and decontextualized. (Clark and Wilson 1991, p. 90)

Clark and Wilson suggest that Mezirow needs to maximize instead of minimize the impact context has on the meaning and interpretation of experiences and recognize “rationality as theory-laden, value-driven, communally judgmental, and historically situated” (p. 90).

Mezirow’s (1991b) initial response to Clark and Wilson (1991) is that they misinterpreted his viewpoints and at the same time he failed to communicate his ideas adequately. He believes they mistook his emphasis on greater self-direction and autonomy of the individual as a disregard for collaborative and cooperative social action. Furthermore, Mezirow believes their view of a decontextualized transformative learning theory is the result of a misinterpretation of his ideal conditions of rational discourse as contingencies, not as an attempt on his part to move “to a higher level of abstraction, not one which somehow seeks to transcend culture, but which identifies the essence of how our culture prescribes this process of learning” (Mezirow 1991b, p. 191). Also, these ideal conditions of rational discourse are ideal only as long as they are open to continued assessment and review.

Research on transformative learning tends to support Clark and Wilson's conclusion concerning context and transformative learning. More specifically, the influence of personal contextual factors on a perspective transformation is found in what is referred to by other studies as a readiness for change (Bailey 1996; Hunter 1980; Pierce 1986; Van Nostrand 1992), the role of experience (Coffman 1989), prior stressful life events (Vogelsang 1993), and a predisposition for a transformative experience (Turner 1986). Taylor (1994), in his study on the transformative nature of intercultural competency, found that the participants "were ready for change due to former critical events, personal goals, or prior intercultural experiences" (p. 169).

This support is also seen by research on sociocultural contextual factors—background context inclusive of related historical and geographical influences—examined by Scott (1991a) as life histories; Weisberger (1995) as historical factors; Edwards (1997) as decontextualization; Elias (1993) as traditions and a legacy from childhood; and Schlesinger (1983) as the pretransition stage. A good example of the sociocultural nature of context is demonstrated by Olson and Kleine (1993) who found that prior high school experience of rural midlife college students influenced the nature of trigger events leading to college entry. Schlesinger (1983), in a study of the transition process of Jewish women entering the work force, found that women "felt that their changes had to be understood within the context of what their lives had been like before they began the entry process....Their early married years provide clues as to why they approached the transition bridge" (p. 85). Most important, this return to the work force was not a random event experienced by a few individuals, but it was indicative of a national trend in response to larger and more complex historical events. These studies seem to encourage a conception of learning, such as situated cognition, that is not bound by the narrow confines of the psychological, but instead, the construction of knowledge is situated personally and historically, "distributed—stretched over, not divided among—mind, body, activity, and cultural organized settings" (Lave 1988, p. 1).

Counter to the predicative and influential nature of context on transformative learning, Neuman (1996) saw a transformation as resulting in participants having the "ability to transcend their immediate and past context and its influence by challenging cultural norms, taking risks, and integrating critical types of reflection into their work and personhood" (p. 472). Furthermore, it involved visiting prior learning contexts and through critical reflection negating their ability to influence future action.

In a later publication Mezirow (1996) makes a more definitive effort to explain how context fits within transformative learning theory. He sees learning as "situated," affected by social and cultural forces. Furthermore, it is important to understand how these forces, historically and biographically, shape our meaning perspectives and also our practice of testing our assumptions and acting on choices. In particular, he reflects on the role of personal and social factors and their impact on rational discourse. "These prevailing forces are of major significance to adult learning; they dictate whose voice shall have priority and who is permitted to be heard. In so doing, they can distort the ideal of full free participation in discourse." (p. 168). And it is by focusing on the ideal conditions of learning that educators can transcend the communicative distortions created by personal and social contextual factors.

Even though Mezirow recognizes that adult learning is situated in a social context, he fails to maintain the connection between the construction of knowledge and the context within which it is interpreted. Learning needs to be seen as located in relations among humans, acting in specific settings, such that the setting and learning activities contribute to the definition of self and the structure of cognition (Wilson 1993). More specifically, this perspective could possibly provide insight into why some disorienting dilemmas lead to a perspective transformation and others do not. An in-depth investigation into the context of disorienting dilemmas may help reveal the social and tool dependent nature of a perspective transformation. This suggests that for a clearer understanding of a significant life event, such as a disorienting dilemma, "educators need take into account contextual factors because these shape the meaning of the learning by structuring it and directing its course" (Clark 1991, p. 152).

Reflective Notes

The focus on context and its relationship to transformative learning reminds me that the students in my classroom are not learning in a vacuum. Their learning has been and is continually shaped and influenced by their personal experience and social and historical events of the day. Furthermore, the classroom itself is a context shaping the learning and cognition in its own way. The issue of context and learning raises the following questions: What is personally happening in my students' lives that is affecting their learning experience? Historically, what is happening in society that could influence the learning in my classroom? What am I doing as an educator to recognize and take advantage of the contextual nature of learning? How can I shape the context of the classroom to help foster transformative learning?

Universal Adult Learning Theory

A third issue that builds upon the previous concern raised by Clark and Wilson (1991) is Mezirow's (1991a) goal of developing a universal adult learning theory. On one hand Mezirow purports that "transformation theory seeks to elucidate universal conditions and rules that are implicit in linguistic competence or human development" (p. xiii), whereas on the other he cites Geertz's notion of cultural determinism, whereby culture acts a template "for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as a genetic system provides such a template for the organization of organic processes" (Geertz 1973, p. 216). It would seem difficult to have it both ways, such that there are universalistic aspects of learning across culturally induced world views. Moreover, it is the autonomous and self-directed nature that permeates Mezirow's (1997) world view: an emphasis on the individual orientation toward making meaning and the essentiality that the "individual" must be free to determine his or her own reality as opposed to mutually accepting the social realities defined by others.

This conundrum between a universalistic approach to learning and cultural determinism is further illuminated by the role Mezirow (1991a) sees that culture plays in human thought. He states that "culture can encourage or discourage transformative thought"

(p. 3). This statement suggest that transformative learning is a process of learning to which all cultures should aspire, even though it is discouraged and inhibited by some. He makes reference to the essentiality of critical reflection in transformative learning, implying it is a "higher" form of learning not found in all individuals and cultures. Could not critical reflection be a way of learning that develops its essentiality based on the needs of the culture from which it evolved? Who, by what means, and from what cultural perspective decides the best "ways of knowing"? A response to these questions might be best answered by his latest article where he argues that critical reflection and rational discourse have proven themselves in more circumstances to work better at understanding the underlying assumptions of human communication (Mezirow 1998). He goes on to say:

> Transformation Theory does not hold that critical reflection and rational discourse represent some transcendental version of the eternal verities or are of an order of reality that transcends the empirical world of change, but *simply that they have been found to work* better in more circumstances than have other options. They are universal in the sense that discourse is predicated upon universal principles. From this vantage point, critical reflection, discourse, and rationality itself develops only as a consequence of inquiry. The alternatives to discourse involves basing understanding upon tradition, authority, or physical force. In cultures where the objective is to perpetuate a religion or a regime, or to produce a docile work force, critical reflection and discourse are commonly limited. (p. 188)

Unfortunately, the present empirical studies in transformative learning offer little that informs this debate. Few studies have designed the selection of their participants to ensure diverse perspectives (class, gender, race, ethnicity). Furthermore, of the few studies that did attempt to offer a cultural balance among participants (Bailey 1996; Elias 1993; Pope 1996), even fewer investigated the relationship of cultural differences to transformative learning theory.

Mezirow's (1991a) theory of transformative learning seems to attempt to be all things to all people. He equates helping learners learn with acquiring more developmentally advanced meaning perspectives as the cardinal goal of adult education. This goal dilutes transformative learning theory as opposed to strengthening its role in understanding adult learning. Transformative learning theory like any other theory is a derivative of its creator's own culture. A different culture may share transformative learning theory,

but it is culturally, socially, and historically contextualized based on the needs and views of learning within. In essence, learning is not to be perceived from a hierarchical perspective, but instead, one that is culturally based. "There is a need to recognize that theories are context specific" (Gallagher 1997, p. 114). Lastly, before linking transformative learning to other fields and cultures, it needs to be firmly established in its own right, as a viable theory of explaining how adults learn. This means that more hard research needs to be conducted in a variety of settings to validate the significance of its various premises (Taylor 1993).

Reflective Notes

This idea of transformative learning as a universal model of adult learning begs the following questions: Should the goal of teaching be framed around one perspective of learning, that of transformative learning? Should all learning be about the promotion of transformative learning? Is it good teaching to promote a universal model of adult learning to a student body defined by an array of diverse positionalities (race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation)? How does transformative learning transcend cultural difference in the classroom? Whose interest am I serving by fostering transformative learning? If I choose to foster transformative learning from Mezirow's perspective how do I account for and address the cultural differences among my students?

Adult Development: Shift or Progression

Mezirow has taken the position that perspective transformation parallels the process of adult development (1991a). This is based on the assumption that a perspective transformation reflects a developmental movement through a series of steps and phases by an individual away from a concrete, egocentric, context free, and nonreflective view of the world toward a more progressive developmental meaning perspective. However, Tennant (1993) would disagree, arguing the position that Mezirow does not "distinguish between 'normative' psychological development (. . . life cycles or phases within a world view) . . . and the type of developmental shift implied by perspective transformation, which is more fundamentally transformative and involves some level of social critique

(. . . the questioning of a world view)" (p. 34). In essence, Mezirow does not recognize the socially constructed nature of development, such that there is a whole host of institutions, events, and regulations marking developmental stages of adulthood as well as those marked by age transitions in our society. "He needs to distinguish learning experiences and personal changes which are fundamentally transformative and emancipatory from those which are simply part of the social expectations associated with the different phases of life" (Tennant 1993, p. 39). Tennant sees the transformation of meaning schemes most closely associated with adult development. A perspective transformation, which always requires critical reflection, implies a developmental shift, whereas moving through normative life cycles of adulthood implies developmental progress.

Mezirow (1994) formally responds to Tennant by arguing that he is creating a false dichotomy between developmental shift and developmental progress. He would argue that "developmental progress occurs through 'shifts'—transformations in both meaning schemes and meaning perspectives—toward the acquisition of meaning perspectives and schemes which are more inclusive differentiating, permeable, and integrative of experience" (p. 228). Mezirow also sees two paths of a perspective transformation, one that is epochal and the other that is incremental, further illustrating the interrelationship of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. The epochal path generally involves a major cataclysmic event (disorienting dilemma) in a person's life that initiates a change in a meaning perspective. Although the incremental path involves revision of meaning schemes, cumulatively over time this results in a perspective transformation. Furthermore, Mezirow makes the premise that psychological codes can be separated from social codes (norms, language codes, ideologies, philosophies and theories), meaning that an individual can develop or transform due to a critique of the psychological without a critique of the social. This assumption seems to substantiate further the criticism of Mezirow not giving enough attention to the forces that socially constrain and act upon psychological development. "Ultimately education can lead to oppressive or liberatory change; the former domesticates learners by simply helping them to adjust to socially expected developmental tasks, while the latter assists them to fundamentally question their perspectives on the world and their place in it" (Tennant 1994, p. 235).

Reflective Notes

What I think is most important to Tennant (1994) about the relationship between the process perspective transformation and adult development is not their difference, but the need for educators to embrace a developmental perspective of teaching. It means as an educator asking yourself and your students What constitutes development? It means acknowledging the psychological nature of development, but as well the social construction of developmental events. Also, it means asking: What are the underlying cultural assumptions about development, for example, of being "an adult," "being transformed," "in midlife crisis," and/or "being elderly?" Whose interest is being served by the different versions of these developmental markers? It also poses the challenge of what actions as an educator do I take to facilitate a developmental perspective in my classroom? Also, how do I address adequately students who come to my class at different developmental stages in their lives?

An Emphasis on Rationality

Another major area of discussion has been the emphasis on rationality in transformative learning theory. This issue of rationality manifests itself in Mezirow's overreliance on critical reflection as a means of effecting a perspective transformation. He (1990) states that "by far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical reflection—reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling, and acting" (p. 13). He identifies three forms of reflection in the transformation of meaning structures: content (reflecting on what we perceive, think, feel, and act), process (reflecting on how we perform the functions of perceiving), and premise (an awareness of why we perceive). Premise reflection, least common of the three and the basis for critical reflection, involves the examination of long-held presuppositions. According to Mezirow (1995) it is the emphasis on rationality, examining the very nature, consequence, and origin of our meaning perspectives, that can lead to a perspective transformation. Criticism arises much in part to his overly Western view of epistemology. "A number of writers have pointed out that rational thinking is a particularly Western concept, a product of the Enlightenment and Descartes' mind/body spilt. Even in the West, rationality, and in particular its

separation from experience, is also gender specific privileging men, the middle and upper class, and whites" (Merriam and Caffarella 1998). On the other hand, empirical research not only supports Mezirow's assumption about rationality, but also identifies other factors such as the role of emotions, other ways of knowing, and unconscious learning, of equal importance in a perspective transformation.

Emotions and Critical Reflection

Most research that focused on reflection in relationship to transformative learning seems to do so at the level of critical reflection (premise reflection). Of those studies, most concur with Mezirow on one level: critical reflection is significant to transformative learning. For example, among the quantitative studies, Williams' (1985) investigation of spouse abuse therapy found that men who demonstrated the greatest increase in the use of reasoning tactics (reflection) also had the greatest decrease in physically abusive behavior; and Van Nostrand (1992) found a significant correlation between the variables of critical analysis, life dissatisfaction, and social support. However, several studies concluded that critical reflection is granted too much importance in a perspective transformation, a process too rationally driven. Scott (1991a) concurs with Brooks (1989), who found in a study focusing on critical reflection and organizational change that "critically reflective learning processes consist of more than just the critical thought strategies generally thought to comprise them" (p. 175). In other words transformative learning is more than rationally based, but is reliant on the affective dimension of knowing. This dimension of knowing focuses on the role that emotions and feelings play in learning and making meaning. Morgan (1987), Coffman (1989), and Sveinunggaard (1993) found that critical reflection can begin only once emotions have been validated and worked through. Gehrels (1984), in his study exploring how school principals made meaning from experience, found feelings to be the trigger for reflection. Neuman (1996) offers the most extensive study at present and one of the few carried out in an ongoing design (as opposed to a retrospective design), where he observed critical reflection developmentally and in its relationship to transformative learning among participants in the National Extension Leadership Development Program. Neuman found that transformative learning and critical reflection have an interactive and interdependent relationship. In more holistic critically reflective learning episodes, inclusive of affective and experiential elements, "participants developed significant capacity both to achieve a higher level of self-

understanding and greater self-direction" (p. 435). Like Neuman, Shurina-Egan (1985) found, while exploring the learning process in family therapy, that a "more complex learning occurred when an affective change occurred" (p. 216).

This overreliance on rationality in transformative learning theory has also been explored from a physiological perspective (Taylor 1996; 1997b). There has been a notable increase of scientific studies published over the last decade in neurobiology—life sciences that involve the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the nervous system (Caine and Caine 1994; Davidson and Cacioppo 1992) that provide a more in-depth understanding of human thinking and decision making. Contemporary research is revealing a more integrated relationship between the physiological process of cognition and emotion. LeDoux (1989) argues that cognition and emotion are mediated by separate and interacting systems of the brain. Parrott and Schulkin (1993) go even further, arguing that the continued separation of emotions from cognition perpetuates the belief that emotions are less complex and primitive. Instead, emotions should be recognized as inherently cognitive, because research shows that "emotions anticipate future needs, prepare for actions, and even prepare for thinking certain types of thoughts"(p. 56). The functions of emotions are seen more and more as filling the "gaps left by 'pure reason' in the determination of action and belief" (de Sousa 1991, p. 195).

Reflective Notes

Rationality seems to be significant to transformative learning, though possibly not any more significant than the role of emotions and feelings. However, I tend to think that most educators focus on practices that facilitate rational thinking, such as critical reflection, and do not recognize its interdependent relationship with feelings. The discussion of feelings is something we often avoid in the classroom, arguing they are too subjective for formulating reasons and decisions. The irony is that just because we choose not to discuss them does not mean they don't exist and exploiting them might actually help in the process of critical reflection. All of this makes me think about the role of education and emotional development. How do I feel about exploring the underlying emotions to thoughts discussed in the classroom? How do I as an adult educator get my students to reflect on and share their feelings in class in a safe and non-threatening manner? What risks are at stake when exploring feelings in the adult classroom?

Other Ways of Knowing

These forms of knowing refer to ways of knowing other than critical reflection that have shown to be significant in the process of a perspective transformation. Multiple studies refer to the importance of such ways as intuition (Bailey 1996; Brooks 1989), affective learning (Clark 1991; Scott 1991a; Sveinunggaard 1993), extrarational knowing (Vogelsang 1993), and the guiding force of feelings (Hunter 1980; Taylor 1994). The Group for Collaborative Inquiry (1994), in a recent study reconceptualizing the transformative learning process, identified the significance of whole person learning—"awareness and use of all the functions we have available for knowing, including our cognitive, affective, somatic, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions" (p. 171).

Included in other ways of knowing is connected knowing or learning through relationships. Relational knowing, the role of relationships in the learning process, has been given only minor attention by Mezirow in transformative learning theory. He has referred to the role of relationships only indirectly and generally in association with rational discourse and the final phases of a perspective with the intent of maximizing understanding between participants (Mezirow 1995). Also, he has tended to give less attention to the more subjective elements of relationships (trust, friendship, support) and their impact on transformative learning. Research has shown these latter elements of relationships to be the most common findings among all the studies reviewed (Taylor 1997a). Relationships, connected ways of knowing, were conceptualized in a variety of ways, such as modeling (Bailey 1996; Brooks 1989; Hunter 1980), interpersonal support (Morgan 1987), social support (Van Nostrand 1992), family connections (Pope 1996), networking (Elias 1993; Schlesinger 1983), learning-in-relationship (Group for Collaborative Inquiry 1994), friendships (First and Way 1995; Holt 1994; Taylor 1993, 1994) and developing trust (Gehrels 1984; Saavedra 1995; Shurina-Egan 1985). Cochrane (1981) found in a study about the meaning derived from personal withdrawal experiences that "it is in and through the disclosure of one's self to another that meaning develops and is enhanced" (p. 114). It is important to note that connected knowing, often thought to be gender based, was also found to be significant among working class men returning to community college (Weisberger 1995).

"These findings contradict the autonomous and formal nature of transformative learning as we presently understand it, and instead reveal a learning process that is much more dependent upon the creation of support, trust, and friendship with others."

These findings contradict the autonomous and formal nature of transformative learning as we presently understand it, and instead reveal a learning process that is much more dependent upon the

creation of support, trust, and friendship with others. Even though Mezirow sees discourse with others as significant to transformative learning, it is the lack of attention given to the role that relationships play in transformative learning that is so concerning. This omission is demonstrated most directly in his discussion of the ideal conditions for fostering transformative learning. It is through building trusting relationships that learners develop the necessary openness and confidence to deal with learning on an affective level, which is essential for managing the threatening and emotionally charged experience of transformation. Without the medium of relationships, critical reflection is impotent and hollow, lacking the genuine discourse necessary for thoughtful and in-depth reflection.

Despite all this research supporting the significance of relationships in transformative learning, "the field [adult education] neither adequately prepares nor supports adult educators to manage the dynamics of helping relationships or the dynamics of transformative learning within the context of those relationships" (Robertson 1996, pp. 43-44). Mezirow, along with others, offers little guidance in an area that is often fraught with professional challenges "such as transference, counter transference, confidentiality, sexual attraction, supervision, and burnout, each with attendant ethical, legal, and efficacy considerations" (p. 44). Robertson goes on to offer recommendations toward addressing this problem by (1) affirming adult education models that encourage helping relationships in transformative learning; (2) encouraging a teacher-learner centered theoretical focus; (3) promoting research on helping relationships; (4) revising preparatory curriculum for adult educators to address the dynamics of relationship building; (5) developing a code of ethics; and (6) providing confidential consultative support.

In addition to relationships, another "other way knowing" that provides insight into the nature of a perspective transformation is the unconscious development of thoughts and actions that occur without critical reflection, such that "meaning structures may become altered outside the participants focal awareness" (Taylor 1997b, p. 171). One explanation for the change in meaning perspectives among the participants, independent of reflection and conscious awareness, is understanding their implicit learning of new skills and habits. Skills and habits (procedural knowledge), such as driving a car or riding a bike, are often nonreflective actions that "take place outside focal awareness in what Polanyi (1967) refers to as tacit awareness" (Mezirow 1991, p. 106). They can be learned and improved upon outside one's conscious awareness. This lack of critical reflection in relation to transformative

learning is further demonstrated by both Scott (1991a,b) and Elias (1993) who looked at individuals involved in social transformation. They found that transformative theory does not recognize the power of the unconscious. In Elias' study this meant discovering the irrational and developing life's direction through visions and dreams, whereas Scott identified the power of the collective unconscious as a stronger force than "rational assumptions or self-interest" (p. 240).

A final perspective on deemphasizing the cognitive process is offered by Edwards (1997) who conducted a collaborative inquiry into the lives of five women exploring their learning process of constructing and restructing their sexual identities in context to contemporary cultural codes. She found that these women relied on counter or alternative narratives in their transformative learning process, not rational discourse, when their life experiences exceeded the dominant cultural narratives on sexual identity. She contends that "transformational learning does not necessarily occur as the rational process Mezirow has presented. Rather our lives seem to be narratively organized and transformation occurs as a change in how we restory our lives in relation to a particular cultural narrative" (p. 184). Furthermore, this positioning of transformative learning narratively rather than cognitively allowed for a whole person approach to the learning process (Brooks and Edwards 1997; Edwards 1997).

These studies and others clearly show that transformative learning is not just rationally and consciously driven, but incorporates a variety of extrarational and unconscious modalities for revising meaning structures. They not only confirm the importance of rationality to transformative learning, but recognize as well other ways of knowing that are of equal importance to the learning process.

Reflective Notes

I believe practicing "other ways of knowing" and developing relationship pose the biggest challenge to adult educators in the practice of transformative learning. At the same time they offer insight into ways for significant learning to occur. However, if we as educators start to put an emphasis on these forms of learning are we properly trained for the related consequences? Furthermore, by emphasizing other ways of knowing in our practice are we beginning to cross the line between education and therapy? It also means asking: How does an emphasis on relationships and other ways of knowing change the role of adult educator? How do we best develop safe and responsible relationships in the classroom not only between the teacher and students, but among the students as well?

Perspective Transformation: The Model

This section of unresolved issues focuses on three particular aspects related to the steps/phases of the model of a perspective transformation. Specifically, the following are discussed: (1) the steps or phases of a perspective transformation; (2) the catalyst or trigger of a perspective transformation—a disorienting dilemma; and (3) the outcome—the definition of a perspective transformation. It is important to note that most critique in this area has been found predominantly among the empirical publications.

The Steps or Phases

Beginning with the model itself as defined by Mezirow (1978a, 1995), it outlines a process of a perspective transformation based on a study of women returning to school after a long hiatus. It is often illustrated as a linear, though not always step-wise process, beginning with a disorienting dilemma followed by a self-examination of feelings, critical reflection, exploration and planning of new roles, negotiating relationships, building confidence, and developing a more inclusive and discriminating perspective. His model of a perspective transformation has been confirmed in general by some studies (Dewane 1993; Hunter 1980; Lytle 1989; Morgan 1987; Shurina-Egan 1985; Williams 1985). However, few

of the studies provided actual data confirming each step. Of the studies that were supportive, Lytle's (1989) work on nurses returning to school for a bachelor of science in nursing degree was the most thorough in exploring the different steps to a perspective transformation, although she found only 30% (sample of 7) of the participants demonstrated all 10 steps. Later studies find the process of perspective transformation to be more recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature (Coffman 1989, 1991; Elias 1993; Holt 1994; Laswell 1994; Neuman 1996; Saavedra 1995; Taylor 1994). Mezirow (1995) concurs in his later publication that the process does not always follow the exact sequence of phases. More specifically, Coffman's (1989) study, an attempt to understand the patterns of acceptance and feelings of resentment among seminary students in response to an inclusive language mandate, determined a revision of three stages of perspective transformation. She was critical of stages 2, 3, and 4, arguing that not enough emphasis was put on the surprise, intensity, and processing of feelings. Coffman believed that without the expression and recognition of feelings participants will not engage their new reality, leave behind past resentment, and begin critical reflection. This seems to be consistent with other research on the relationship between critical reflection and feelings.

Pope (1996), who explored the impact of first generation higher education among ethnically diverse working class women, found the steps "do not adequately explain the long-term processes of transformation. . . . Over a period of time that spans 2 or 3 decades in the lives of these women, 'steps' lose relevance and are forgotten" (p. 176). Saavedra's (1995) investigation of a teachers' study group found transformative learning a process of consistent engagement in cycles of inquiry supported by 13 transformative conditions (e.g., self-assessment, ownership, mediational events, reflective practice, direct access to knowledge). Instead of using the 10 phases as a model for teacher transformation, she framed transformative learning within Mezirow's four forms of learning, revealing a developmental process from learning within meaning schemes to the transformation of meaning perspectives.

In essence, it became quite clear as I reviewed these studies that Mezirow's model was not inclusive of all the essential aspects inherent in the process of a perspective transformation. Even the studies (Hunter 1980; Morgan 1987; Williams 1985) that Mezriow (1991a) cites for empirical evidence in his book ***Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*** reveal much more of the complexity of transformative learning than the 10-11 stage model depicts. For example, Morgan's (1987) study on displaced homemakers is, in

several ways, not supportive of the 10 phases. She does not mention all the stages of the perspective transformation model, and she finds different stages much more fundamental to the transition process. Like Coffman's (1989) "intense feelings," the most universal and profound stage in Morgan's research was "anger" and that this anger had to be resolved before the participant could move on in the transition process. Furthermore, all three of these studies gave little attention to critical reflection, a component considered most essential to perspective transformation. Hunter (1980), in a study of individuals who drastically altered their nutritional habits, seems to deemphasize rationality as she found her participants "used some measure of *blind faith* in order to switch [nutritional habits]. . . . They temporarily suspended their critical faculties to make behavioral changes they did not fully understand" (p. 263, italics added).

Disorienting Dilemma

The catalyst and the first phase of Mezirow's (1978a) perspective transformation is a disorienting dilemma—an acute internal/external personal crisis. Most of the studies that explored the complete process of a perspective transformation concur with this aspect of Mezirow's model, although some studies broaden the definition of a disorienting dilemma. Clark (1991, 1993), who explored the impact of context on the process of perspective transformation, found that not only is a disorienting dilemma a trigger to transformative learning, but so are "integrating circumstances." Integrating circumstances are "indefinite periods in which the persons [sic] consciously or unconsciously searches for something which is missing in their life; when they find this missing piece, the transformation process is catalyzed" (pp. 117-118). Scott (1991a), in her study on the nature of transformation that results from a leader's participation in a community organization, identified two types of disequilibrium that were necessary for initiating change in beliefs: (1) an external event that provokes an internal dilemma and (2) an internal disillusionment whereby the participants recognize that previous approaches and solutions are no longer adequate. In contrast to the others, Pope (1996), whose study focused predominantly on women of color, found the trigger event "more like an unfolding evolution rather than a response to a crisis" (p. 176). This finding seems to fit with Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves' (1996, 1998) study of the meaning-making process among those diagnosed as HIV positive. They found an "initial reaction" at diagnosis that lasted 6 months to 5 years. This reaction

was followed by a "catalytic experience" that helped HIV patients view their diagnosis in a new and more productive way.

Despite this more in-depth research into the catalyst of transformative learning, there is little understanding of why some disorienting dilemmas lead to a perspective transformation and others do not. What factors contribute and/or inhibit this triggering process? Why do some significant events, such as death of a loved one or personal injury, not always lead to a perspective transformation, whereas seemingly minor events, such as a brief encounter or a lecture, sometimes stimulate transformative learning? Two studies provide some insight into these questions. Elias (1993), in a study about the development of socially transformative leaders, identified eight categories of common learning experiences that led to a new perspective. These supported the values and capacities of leaders for social transformation, such as developing multiple intelligences, cultivating critical thinking, expressing one's voice, and successfully confronting authority. The baseline experience in his study for women was confronting authority, whereas for men it was developing a greater awareness of one's feelings. Clevinger (1993), in a study of the transformative experience of kidney transplant patients, found sociocultural distortions a precursor of transformative learning and "if identified before-the-fact, perhaps they could qualify as predictors of transformative learning" (p. 99).

Defining a Perspective Transformation

One of the most elusive concepts of transformative learning is the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation. What is the consequence of changing your world view? What are related outcomes of revising meaning perspectives? Mezirow (1991a) defines a perspective transformation as—

> the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 167)

Accompanying this change in meaning perspective is an increase in self-confidence in new roles and relationships. Most studies concur with Mezirow's definition of a perspective transformation; however, many studies also found this definition too narrow and rationally

based. The present definition connotes that as a result of a perspective transformation an individual becomes more in touch with his or her logical-rational side, again discounting other ways of knowing. Clark (1991), on the other hand, identified three dimensions to a perspective transformation: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). In Van Nostrand's (1992) synthesized model of lifestyle changes of female ex-smokers, she operationalized a perspective transformation as a revelation that included new concepts of knowledge, mystical experience, personal power, and a redefined perspective followed by a sustained change over time. Additional characteristics of a transformation emerge from other studies as well, such as an increase in personal power (Hunter 1980; Pierce 1986; Pope 1996; Schlesinger 1983; Scott 1991a; Sveinunggaard 1993; Turner 1986; Van Nostrand 1992), spirituality, a transpersonal realm of development (Cochrane 1981; Hunter 1980; Lucas 1994; Scott 1991a; Sveinunggaard 1993; Van Nostrand 1992), compassion for others (Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves 1996, 1998; First and Way 1995; Gehrels 1984), creativity (Scott 1991a), a shift in discourse (Saavedra 1995), courage (Lucas 1994; Neuman 1996), a sense of liberation (Bailey 1996), and a new connectedness with others (Gehrels 1984; Laswell 1994; Weisberger 1996). Two studies, interestingly, identified the occurrence of regression (Williams 1985) and flashbacks (Laswell 1994) among participants after a period of time following a perspective transformation. Most studies were carried out in retrospect and do not clearly know the participants' original perspective prior to a transformative learning experience. Also, several studies that reported a perspective transformation among participants offered little or no data for support or clarification.

Reflective Notes

I find that the three areas just discussed provoke some of the greatest interest among students exploring transformative learning theory. They are intrigued by questions most basic to understanding a perspective transformation, such as: What triggers a change in meaning perspectives? Is the change purely an individual psychological phenomenon or is their a social dimension to change? Why do certain triggers in our lives result in a perspective transformation and others not? What needs to take place (e.g., steps, phases, action, conditions) for the trigger to evolve into a transformation? Does one's perspective continue to change, regress, or remain static? What are the inherent characteristics of a perspective transformation? What amount of change constitutes a perspective transformation? What defines a perspective transformation? How often could a perspective transformation occur in a person's lifetime?

Conclusion

The intent of the second section of this monograph was to synthesize all the major critiques and empirical studies of transformative learning theory over the last 20 years. From this synthesis the purpose was to identify the unresolved issues about the basic premises of transformative learning theory and the varying nature of a perspective transformation. Focusing specifically on the basic premises, seven significant issues were identified:

1. Individual vs. social change
2. A decontextualized view of learning
3. A universal view of adult learning
4. Transformative learning as adult development
5. An emphasis on rationality
6. A need for other ways of knowing
7. The model of a perspective transformation

Much of the criticism with transformative learning theory rests on Mezirow's appropriation and integration of Habermas' communicative theory of learning with the epistemology of transformative learning. I would concur, but also add that the difference between the critiques and Mezirow's interpretation of transformative

learning theory is due in large part to the various authors' differing views of self and its locus of control in the universe. For example, Mezirow is described as viewing the individual as having a choice and control over his or her environment and comes by his or her own ends as a result of individual actions and desires. He sees reality as perceived and understood from the frame of reference of the individual instead of superimposed by society. On the opposite end of the continuum, for example, fall Collard and Law (1989) who see individuals as pawns within sociocultural and historical events. They do not see the individual separate from society; instead, they are one and the same. In the middle seem to fall Clark and Wilson (1991) whereby they recognize not only the free will of the individual but as well the formative impact the sociocultural context has on the self. In essence, it is these researchers' own frame of reference in regard to the structuring of the "self" that prevents them from arriving at a congruent understanding of transformative learning theory.

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Ironically, it is this emphasis on the individual, the self, that has dominated research concerning the nature of a perspective transformation. As the review shows, most of the studies have focused on the individual transformative experience in a variety of different settings. From these studies emerged a number of concerns about the process of a perspective transformation. Specifically, there seems to be a lack of recognition of the role of emotions and relational knowing and an overemphasis on essentiality of critical reflection. Furthermore, the various components and phases of the model itself have been called into question, such that the process revealed is much more complex than initially thought. For example, transformative learning cannot account for why all disorienting dilemmas do not lead to a transformation. Furthermore, the definition of a perspective transformation seems to stop short at recognizing a higher level of conscious, the collective unconscious, beyond its autonomous and self-serving outcome.

Fostering Transformative Learning: The Practice of Transformative Pedagogy

I saved the last issue, the fostering of transformative learning, to set the stage for the third section of this monograph—the practice of transformative pedagogy. Mezirow (1991a) believes that transformative learning theory provides the foundation for a philosophy of adult education that results in a prescription of ideal educational interventions in promoting adult learning. In transformative learning the most significant learning occurs in the communicative domain which "involves identifying problematic ideas, values, beliefs, and feelings, critically examining the assumptions upon which they are based, testing their justification through rational discourse and making decisions predicated upon the resulting consensus" (Mezirow 1995, p. 58). This is seen as the central activity to be fostered by educators of adults.

The practice of fostering transformative learning in an educational setting is based on a plethora of literature that outlines in detail the ideal conditions for rational discourse, the teachers' and students' role, and the related instructional approaches (Cranton 1994; Mezirow 1990, 1991a, 1995, 1996, 1997). However, only until recently has the practice of transformative pedagogy been explored empirically in any depth. Eleven studies were identified that focused on the practice of fostering transformative learning: Bailey 1996; Cusack 1990; Dewane 1993; Gallagher 1997; Kaminsky 1997; Ludwig 1994; Matusicky 1982; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995, 1996; Vogelsang 1993). It is important to note that many of these studies looked at how personal change was facilitated from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Freire, Vygotsky,

Boyd), not exclusively Mezirow's, and in a variety of settings (not just classrooms). Also, none of these studies involved the actual application and testing of the ideal learning conditions outlined by Mezirow (1991a) in fostering transformative learning. Furthermore, like most of the research conducted on transformative learning, few of the later studies had reviewed any of the earlier studies in an effort to build upon previous work. This is not to say that these empirical studies do not offer insight into the practice of teaching adults. Quite the contrary, most of them confirm to some extent what is outlined in the literature about transformative learning.

My approach to making sense of this disparate literature was to begin to identify the essential practices for fostering transformative learning based on shared findings of the different studies. These essential practices are reviewed in relationship to what Mezirow purports as significant to fostering transformative learning; new findings are also mentioned. In addition, I identified five general themes about the nature of transformative pedagogy for greater discussion: transformative learning as group situated, as time consuming, as a predisposition, as affective learning, and educator and students as transformative learners. To assist in bringing these themes to life, four studies are discussed in greater depth in this section to offer a context for understanding the practice of fostering transformative learning.

Essential Practices and Conditions

This first section attempts to identify the essential practices to fostering transformative learning. In particular, these studies reveal a number of findings that support the ideal conditions outlined by Mezirow (1991a) (refer to page 12 of the monograph) as essential for fostering transformative learning, for example—

- ideal learning conditions promote a sense of safety, openness, and trust (Bailey 1996; Dewane 1993; Gallagher 1997; Matusicky 1982; Ludwig 1994; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995, 1996);
- effective instructional methods that support a learner-centered approach (Bailey 1996; Gallagher 1997; Matusicky 1992; Saavedra 1995); promote student autonomy, participation, and collaboration (Bailey 1996; Gallagher 1997; Ludwig 1994; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995); and

- the importance of activities that encourage the exploration of alternative personal perspectives, problem-posing, and critical reflection (Bailey 1996; Gallagher 1997; Kaminsky 1997; Neuman 1996; Saavedra 1995; Vogelsang 1993).

However, the findings also revealed an array of other conditions equally important to those often emphasized by Mezirow, that of establishing a learning situation that is democratic, open, rational, has access to all available information, and promotes critical reflection. These other conditions include—

- the necessity for teachers to be trusting, empathetic, caring (Bailey 1996; Kaminsky 1997; Ludwig 1994; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986), authentic, sincere, and demonstrating a high degree of integrity (Pierce 1986);
- the emphasis on personal self-disclosure (Dewane 1993; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995);
- the essentiality of discussing and working through emotions and feelings before critical reflection (Gallagher 1997; Kaminsky 1997; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995);
- the importance of feedback and self-assessment (Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995);
- solitude (Neuman 1996); and
- self-dialogue (Scott 1991a).

In addition to these conditions other themes were identified that are worthy of greater discussion because they affirm earlier findings and at the same time offer new insight into the nature of fostering transformative learning.

Transformative Learning as Group Situated

Most of the studies on the fostering of transformative learning took place within intensive group settings (Dewane 1993; Gallagher 1997; Kaminsky 1997; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986; Saavedra 1995; 1996). One in particular, a longitudinal study, looked at the following question: "What process of teacher transformation occurs during social interactions between teachers within a cohesive and sustained study group context?" (Saavedra 1995, p. 16). Over a 2-year period Saavedra facilitated the Davis Teachers' Study Group in which six teachers met on a weekly basis with the general intent of analyzing issues and strategies related to the teaching in each participant's classroom, student learning, and the learning and knowledge development of each participant. Through the use of video

and audiotape, reflective journals, and field notes, Saavedra was able to show that placing teachers at the center of their own learning in a critically reflective and social context contributes to a transformation. Much of the change among the participants involved developing an awareness and coming to terms with the perceptions they held about students and parents and how they viewed themselves as teachers and learners.

Most significant was Saavedra's (1996) identification of conditions essential for transformative learning within a group setting. She sees these conditions not arising from some outside source, but are "constructed within social contexts by involved participants in order to facilitate transformative learning . . . and intended not to replicate social and power structures, ideological stances, and other aspects of the institutional status quo" (p. 273). The conditions that facilitate transformative learning in this study group were as follows:

- **Dialogic Context**. It is essential that participants have the opportunity to share their social, political, and cultural history with each other in a setting that makes an intentional effort to be collaborative and democratic so all voices are heard.
- **Identity and Voice**. "The study group provides a location in which participants can become consciously active in the exploration and (re)construction of their identities and voice by exploring their own ethnic, gender, and class experiences" (p. 273).
- **Ownership and Agency**. It is essential that when teachers participate in transformative groups they are directly involved in negotiating the intent of the group. It is through personal agency that they develop the understanding of how to change individually and collectively.
- **Dissonance and Conflict.** When teachers begin sharing and reflecting on their beliefs and practices in a collaborative setting they often experience clashes among differing perspectives. "Embracing the dissonance and conflict as learning opportunities is essential for transformative learning" (p. 274).
- **Mediational Events and Demonstrations.** Efforts need to made to mediate the interpretation of the different topics discussed in the group. Furthermore, demonstrations of authentic learning situations are quite helpful. This often involved the group viewing and participating in a learning event led by one of the participants.

- **Reflection, Action, and Generation**. There needs to be time and opportunity for participants to reflect and act on their group learning experience, along with generating new knowledge base on the reflective action experience.
- **Self-assessment and Evaluation**. The group provides a space for teachers, at a distance, to evaluate their practice through critique and reflection. "They not only progress in their transformations but begin to construct changes in their everyday practices and beliefs that may impede their effectiveness with students." (p. 274).
- **Reflective Practice and Recreating Teaching**. A process is initiated between the study group and the teachers practice that sets "into motion a cycle of taking stock of daily events; applying new strategies; adjusting and making changes; reconstructing activities, strategies, and materials; further developing what is effective; and exchanging those that do not work for newly generated applications" (p. 274).

What is most significant about this study is that it brings to light not previously mentioned essential factors of transformative pedagogy within a group setting. One in particular is the members' cultural background. Saavedra found that it was necessary for all the participants to have an opportunity to situate themselves historically, politically, and culturally within the context of the group. In order to create an open and democratic environment in the group, issues of positionality (race, class, gender, ethnicity) need to be discussed in relationship to the overall objective of the group.

A second group factor is the essentiality of dissonance and conflict, such that embracing conflict among group members as opposed to avoiding it was necessary for transformative learning. This finding seems to contradict the idea that conflict should be minimized based on the assumption that it undermines a supportive group environment (Cranton 1994). Saavedra (1996) found that the conflicts within and between group members offered real learning opportunities, providing an excellent medium for exploring differences.

A third group factor was the necessity to act on a new ideas, whereby it is not enough just to experience rational discourse and critical reflection and possibly make the a decision to act. Instead it is important that group members have opportunities to validate and explore newly acquired assumptions and beliefs. It is the critical interaction between the study group and other interdependent settings in which teachers work that helps teachers reconstruct their teaching practice.

Saavedra has continued her work in this area by replicating these conditions for fostering transformative learning with a study group of women school principals. A consequence of this experience has been the realization of transformative learning as a method of educational reform. "Groups like this one represent a challenge to empowerment schemes directed from the top. Empowerment that deserves the name is not given by outside agents but is constructed through critical dialogue that results in the transformation of practitioners and of the institutions they construct together" (Anderson and Saavedra 1995, p. 233).

Transformative Learning as Experiential

A theme that emerges from these studies is that fostering transformative learning is not just about making sense of experience through dialogue; it also involves creating experiences that can help facilitate understanding among the participants involved. Experiential, hands-on, learning activities offer a powerful medium for promoting transformative learning. This means looking at alternative approaches to the traditional classroom. A good example is demonstrated in a study by Gallagher (1997) who explored how an adult drama-in-education facilitated changes in understanding and practice among teachers. Drama-in-education is a process that involves all participants in "actively shaping the direction and outcomes of the drama" (p. 14). In this case, it was a series of episodic events based on the lives of the participants. Each event built upon the other, with the outcome not predetermined, taking place over an extended time, involving the entire group including the teacher in its construction, and the audience, which were the participants themselves. Drama-in-education provides a holistic and hands-on medium by which Gallagher explores transformative learning, along with other theoretical models, as a process of change in understanding the practice of teaching.

"Fostering transformative learning is not just about making sense of experience through dialogue; it also involves creating experiences that can help facilitate understanding among the participants involved."

To carry out this study Gallagher (1997) organized a week-long intensive creative drama class for K-12 educators, which she videotaped, as well as collected pre- and postquestionnaires and interviews with 7 of the 15 participants in the class. Her experiential approach to transformative learning revealed a developmental process of change, an emphasis on professional rather personal growth, and specific episodic events that were significant to the participants change in understanding. Furthermore, she identified eight factors about drama-in-education that contributed to change

in understanding and inform the practice of fostering transformative learning:

1. **Accommodating a Range of Learning Styles**. Participants were free to choose the extent and manner of their involvement in the various activities. This learner-centered approach seemed to accommodate a range of skills and learning styles.
2. **The Group**. The "engendering of trust, sense of community, and supporting personal risk-taking" (p. 212) were found to be essential to facilitating change in understanding.
3. **Motivation**. The power of motivation was enhanced through self-selection and a learner-centered approach, situating the locus of control with the individual. Since the students self-selected to be in this course, they were interested and self-motivated in gaining new personal insights and understandings.
4. **Aesthetics**. Aesthetics is the philosophy and value of art. Allowing students to discuss and critique different perspectives about drama-in-education and its various activities played a role in developing an aesthetic sensibility. This sensibility reflected not only an awareness of different viewpoints and a greater appreciation of art as life, but also a greater self-awareness of one's own perspective.
5. **Change in Understanding as a Developmental Process Occurring over Time**. "The interviews make quite clear the fact that there is a sense of time contributing to change and that change is a developmental process. . . . Repetition, occurring throughout the week, also contributed to change in understanding" (pp. 255-256).
6. **An Understanding of Different Perspectives through the Use of the Drama-in-Education Framing Device**. Participants felt they were more creative in their solutions, through the use of and exposure to a variety of perspectives. As drama "evolves and participants assume various perspectives, power differentials are made explicit in a non-threatening way, removed from the "personal" (as in this is how I feel) to a more objective consideration (this is how I feel as someone else)" (p. 267).
7. **Critical Reflection on and in Action.** Drama-in-education provided the opportunity not only for individual reflection *on* action (solitary experience), but also reflection *in* action (social experience), due to its social setting. It is the individual reflection that seems to be a starting point for group discussion, and the group interaction becomes important for developing new ideas.
8. **Affective Learning: Emotional Involvement**. "Emotion emerged as being an important part of the drama-in-education experience" (p. 274). It was the discussion of feelings and

emotions that contributed to the depth of the experience. And drama, playing other characters, provided a distancing effect to safely talk about one's feelings.

Gallagher's study reveals that taking an experiential approach accommodates many of the essential conditions necessary to fostering transformative learning. Drama-in-education seems to provide a context for individuals and groups to explore issues through a different medium, and it capitalizes on an array of individual and group styles of learning, beyond the narrow confines of rational discourse. Furthermore, it broadens the potential of transformative learning's application to other disciplines and groups, recognizing the variety of ways of promoting change in perspective.

Transformative Learning as Time Consuming

Adhering to the practices of transformative pedagogy, particularly in a group setting, requires an inordinate amount of time, something that many regular adult education classrooms do not have available (Gallagher 1997). In her study of a transformative learning group in a higher education setting, Kaminsky (1997) found that adhering to the conditions outlined by Mezirow for promoting rational discourse resulted in a challenge "that inclusiveness in terms of stakeholder membership practically guarantees that groups will have different agendas about what needs to be done, making coming to a consensus an onerous, time-consuming task" (p. 275). Most of these studies that focused on the practice of transformative pedagogy involved an intense group experience over a lengthy period of time. Even under these conditions teachers and participants felt constrained by the demands of time. Furthermore, it seems that it is the very conditions that foster transformative learning, a democratic process, inclusiveness of agendas, striving for consensus, critical reflection, dialogue, etc. that create such a necessity for time. It is time itself that most adult educators struggle with, always trying to balance the demands of the curriculum, students, and institution.

More attention needs to be given by researchers to the "everyday" adult classroom setting and its applicability in fostering transformative learning. Modifications to the ideal conditions need to be explored to better suit the constraints and daily demands experienced by teachers attempting to practice transformative pedagogy.

Transformative Learning as a Predisposition

Another interesting finding that emerged from these studies is that some participants seemed to have a greater predisposition toward change whereas others did not (Bailey 1996; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986). One of the most rigorous studies about fostering transformative learning that brings this to light focused on high learners in a management training program (Pierce 1986). She interviewed 28 "high learners," managers of a Fortune 500 company (those who experienced the greatest degree of change in perspective determined by a self-administered survey) about their learning experience and the related educational practices used in an intensive 1-week residential management training workshop. Pierce found that those participants who came to the training with recent experiences of critical incidences in their lives seemed more predisposed to change. She states:

> The disturbing events in the participants' lives, therefore, create a fertile ground for perspective transformation. Ready to question the very assumptions upon which their lives are based, these participants find themselves involved in an educational experience which encourages a search for meaning, an exploration of oneself and fulfillment of human purpose. (pp. 296-297)

This predisposition for change also seems to support Neuman's (1996) findings on the developmental nature of a critical reflection and critical self-reflection. He found acquiring this critical capacity occurs with and is contingent upon other developmental changes in a person's life. This raises the question of whether it is essential that a predisposition toward change exist among students when a teacher is attempting to foster transformative learning in the classroom. Mezirow (1991a) seems to be aware of this concern somewhat when he refers to a "readiness for transformative learning" (p. 217), identifying different learner stages (conventional, threshold, and emancipated) in his study on reentry women. However, he seems to talk about these stages devoid of context, such that regardless at which stage these learners find themselves, a predisposition for change may or not exist, because of what is currently happening in their lives personally and socially. No real advice or direction is offered about how to work with students that are "less ready" for transformative learning. Furthermore, it begs the question whether it is ethical for a teacher to help "predispose" students toward change?

Transformative Learning as Affective Learning

Previous studies involving transformative learning have clearly shown the importance of affective learning in the transformative process (as discussed earlier in this monograph). However, only recently has this phenomenon been explored in any depth in relationship to fostering transformative learning, particularly critical reflection in educational settings (Bailey 1996; Dewane 1993; Gallagher 1997; Neuman 1996; Pierce 1986).

Neuman's (1996) 2-year longitudinal study of a leadership development program is the most thorough on the relationship between fostering of critical reflection and affective learning. Specifically, he focused on the nature of critically reflective learning among a sample of participants from the intern Program of the National Extension Leadership Development Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The program curriculum attempted to foster reflection framed within the basic principles of practicing transformative learning. He conducted a qualitative case study of nine participants using in-depth interviews, reflective writing, reflective questionnaires, dialogues, and participant observations throughout the entire program experience over a 24-month period. He identified several essential aspects about the fostering of critical reflection:

- A prerequisite to the initial development of a Critical Reflective capacity (critical reflection and critical self-reflection) was "acquiring the ability to recognize, acknowledge and process feelings and emotions as integral aspects of learning from experience" (p. 460).
- The role of affect demonstrated both provocative and evocative characteristics. Provocatively, feelings were often the trigger for reflective learning. An unwillingness to respond to these feelings often resulted in a barrier to learning. Evocatively, exploring one's feelings in depth led to greater self-awareness and the initiation of changes in meaning structures.
- Affect played a multifaceted role in learning from experience. Affect was both part of the reflective learning and content process and "when current affect was incorporated into reflective processing, it often produced clues and insights for directing reflection's focus toward the more fundamental or assumptive basis underlying meaning structures and perspectives" (p. 462).

- The processing of feelings and emotions related to experience was both enabling (expanded the power and scope of critical reflection) and therapeutic (appreciation of working through negative feelings as essential for personal development).
- The outcome of affective learning resulted in a greater sense of self-confidence and self-worth. "Perspective transformations included affective outcomes such as greater appreciation for differences, tolerance for ambiguity and feelings for courage, self-trust and inner strength" (p. 463).
- Episodes of transformative learning and critical self-reflection often involve intensive emotional experiences, particularly grieving the loss of old meaning structures and the acquiring new ones.

Based on the present research, both concerning the latter discussion and those studies mentioned earlier in the monograph, it is quite clear that affective learning plays a primary role in the fostering of transformative learning. Furthermore, it is our very emotions and feelings that not only provide the impetus for us to reflect critically, but often provide the material on which to reflect deeply.

"Affective learning plays a primary role in the fostering of transformative learning."

Educator and Students as Transformative Learners

Most crucial to fostering transformative learning is the role of the educator and students. How is an educator to manage all the challenges associated with the practice of transformative pedagogy? What is the role of the participant in promoting the transformative process? Beyond the cursory directions of creating ideal learning conditions and establishing caring, empathetic and trusting relationships with one's students, the educator is given little empirical support of how best to manage the ethical and emotionally laden minefield of practicing transformative learning. This is not to say that there are no sources for guidance in this area. Mezirow (1991a) himself provides a list of recommendations of how to best facilitate learning and even raises some of the obvious ethical concerns. Cranton (1994) provides the most thorough direction in this area from how best to promote educator awareness, handling conflicts and ethical issues, supporting action, and dealing with individual differences.

However, most significant to the role of the educator seems not to be the various techniques and strategies that they employ; instead it is becoming a transformative learner themselves. This means as educators they "must be adult learners continually striving to

update, develop, expand, and deepen their professional perspectives both on their subject areas and on their goals and roles as educators" (Cranton 1994, p. 228). This means having a deep awareness of their practice, making explicit their underlying assumptions about teaching and learning, developing a critically reflective practice, networking and dialoguing with other educators, and taking an active role in their professional development (Cranton 1994). This description of the educator's role compliments Boyd's mentioned earlier in the monograph, mandating the educator to practice two virtues—seasoned guidance and compassionate criticism.

One study that informs the role of facilitator in transformative learning and confirms to some extent Cranton's view was by Neuman (1996). He identified several factors important for the facilitator in promoting reflection in transformative learning:

- The need for the facilitator to be both willing to learn and change themselves while encouraging others to learn
- The crucial importance of "building a strong relationship based on trust and confidentiality" (p. 487)
- The need to encourage risk-taking through unfamiliar reflective techniques within a learning context that is philosophically consistent
- The crucial importance of "incorporating facilitative strategies that acknowledged, supported, and encouraged affective processing" (p. 489)
- Promoting critical self-reflection to identify, interpret, and get rid of negative feelings

Despite the admirable efforts offered by several to provide guidance to educators in fostering transformative learning, I believe too much emphasis has been placed on the responsibility of the educator, without giving adequate attention to the role and responsibility of the participants in the transformative process. Much of this idea begins with the work of Saavedra (1995, 1996) whose study was discussed earlier in this monograph. As mentioned, she identifiedan array of conditions for fostering transformative learning. Significant to this discussion is that "these conditions are not necessarily provided by an outside force but are constructed and developed within social contexts by involved participants in order to facilitate transformative learning" (1996, p. 273). I interpret this to mean that the group, both participants and teacher, collaboratively assumes responsibility of creating conditions that best suit the needs of the group, and more specifically the practice for fostering transformative learning.

"The group, both participants and teacher, collaboratively assumes responsibility of creating conditions that best suit the needs of the group, and more specifically the practice for fostering transformative learning."

To take this thought even further, it means asking what are the responsibilities of participants in fostering transformative learning. What responsibility do they share with establishing trusting, caring, and empathetic relationships with their peers and the teacher? What degree of participation in class activities, discussion, etc. is essential on their part? In essence, if the class decides to take on the task of fostering transformative learning, does it not have to be a mutual agreement and sharing of responsibility? And for it to be a success do not the participants have to recognize their role and responsibilities in the process? To me, these questions are paramount in practicing transformative pedagogy, such that if the class is not willing to collaborate and share the responsibility, the likelihood of fostering transformative learning is null and void. Furthermore, if the teacher uses her power to push transformative learning on the class, is she not crossing an ethical line, that of tampering with the "world view" of the participants without their permission?

If we as adult educators are going to encourage our peers and students to foster transformative learning we need ourselves to live as transformative learners, and as well give greater attention to the role of participants in dealing with these related challenges. Transformative learning is a collaborative process involving a shared experience by both educator and the student.

Reflective Notes

Looking back over these studies on transformative learning I am excited by the array of settings and methods that are used to foster transformative learning. However, I am also somewhat discouraged, in that, these practices seem atypical from what goes on in an everyday classroom setting. They suggest that to foster transformative learning, much time, intensity of experience, risk, and personal exploration are needed by both the students and the teacher. How do adult educators establish these conditions within classes that meet a few hours each week? How do we accomplish our course objectives and teach essential skills and still allow for in-depth personal exploration? How many of us feel comfortable and capable as adult educators at dealing with emotionally laden issues in our classrooms? How ethical is it for adult educators to create conditions that will put their students in such emotionally challenging classroom experiences? Whose interest are we serving by fostering transformative learning?

Conclusion

The purpose of this final section was to focus on transformative pedagogy—the practice of fostering transformative learning. By reviewing the related empirical studies, my hope was to provide greater insight into the ideal conditions for fostering transformative learning as outlined by Mezirow. Essential practices along with four studies were discussed that brought to light an array of conditions, techniques, and settings that on one level affirm many of the ideal learning conditions, such as promoting critical reflection; providing a safe, open, collaborative, and democratic classroom; and encouraging the exploration of alternative perspectives. However, on another level, these studies identify other conditions of equal importance, such as the need for teachers to establish trusting relationships with their students, to give as much if not more attention to affective learning than critical reflection, the emphasis on personal self-disclosure, self-dialogue, and solitude.

In addition to these findings other concerns were discussed that pose greater challenges for those adult educators who want to foster transformative learning in their classrooms. These challenges included the great demand of time required, a need for an intense group setting, working with students who offer greater and lesser dispositions towards change, the necessity of processing of feelings and emotions in safe and nonthreatening manner, and understanding the role of the educator and participants in the transformative process. Looking back on these challenges, I realize how much has been gained by this exploration, but at the same time how little is still known about the practice of transformative pedagogy. These challenges as well as others mentioned in the studies clearly bring to light the limitations of fostering transformative learning and the need for greater research in this area.

To address the limitations and challenges of fostering transformative learning effectively, I believe it begins with a reconceptualization of the theory itself. This means recognizing to a greater degree its relationship or lack there of to social action and power, the significant influence of context, the interdependent relationship of critical reflection and affective learning, the varying nature of the catalyst of the transformative process, and the role of other ways of knowing and relationships in learning, and an overall broadening of the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation.

Furthermore, research initiatives are needed in several areas:

- Transformative learning needs to be explored at a more in-depth level, to further develop the specific issues raised in this monograph (the varying nature of a disorienting dilemma, the significant of context, the role of critical reflection and affective learning, etc.).
- There needs to be a recognition of difference beyond its universal perspective in order that future research designs include participants that ensure diverse (class, race, gender, sexual orientation) perspectives when exploring transformative learning.
- There is a need for research designs beyond the phenomenological approach, so that other paradigms are used from a longitudinal perspective in exploration of transformative learning.
- There is a tremendous need for all researchers of transformative learning, present (the authors of the reviewed empirical studies) and future, to make a concerted effort to publish their work beyond the dissertation stage. Most of these studies remain in dissertation format or limited conference proceedings. I believe if anything has contributed to the reification of transformative learning theory it has been the lack of dissemination of these studies.
- There needs to be continued exploration into the practice of fostering transformative learning recognizing the limits of promoting an ideal practice, particularly looking at the practically of Mezirow's ideal conditions for learning in a typical classroom setting.

Eighteen years ago Mezirow initiated a profound movement in the field of adult education, that of transformative learning theory. However, as the studies and theoretical critiques in this review clearly show, it was only a beginning and there is still much to be learned about the complex nature of transformative learning.

Appendix A Practices of Transformative Pedagogy

The preceding section on fostering transformative learning focuses on the array of teaching techniques, strategies, and methods used in transformative pedagogy. Based on a review of both the conceptual as well as the empirical literature, I have identified articles, chapters, and books that refer directly and in passing to various teaching techniques in relationship to transformative learning. It is important to note that there are many more sources concerning these specific teaching techniques, but the focus here is in relationship to transformative learning.

Autobiography, Life Histories, and Narratives

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Experiential Activities

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Group Learning, Community Building

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Appendix B
Overview of the Empirical Studies of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Bailey, L. D. (1996)	To explore the process of conceptual change, with attention to metaphor, among doctoral theological students.	Identified five different types of conceptual change: Assimilation, Accommodation through Forming New Categories, Accommodation through Integration, Accommodation through Restructuring, and Perspective Transformation. Explored demographic distribution of change and found Asian males concentrated at Transformation, the highest level of conceptual change. Identified internal (e.g., feelings, intuitive knowledge) and external factors (e.g., cooperative inquiry) as important to a transformation. Found metaphor was a factor in conceptual change in almost every student.
Boyd, E. M., and Fales, A. W. (1983)	To explore the reflection process as it related to meaning transformation.	Identified six stages similar to Mezirow's model of transformative learning.
Brooks, A. K. (1989)	To illuminate the interaction between critically reflective learning and organizational change.	Supported Mezirow's definition of critical reflection, but broadened it as well. Critical reflection was found not to be just rationally based, but relied on intuition, empathy, and other ways of knowing.
Clark, M. C. (1991)	To examine the impact of context on the process of perspective transformation	Described the influence of immediate and historical context on transformative learning. Identified two triggers to transformational learning: integrating circumstances and disorienting dilemma. Identified three dimensions of a perspective transformation: psychological, convictional, and behavioral.
Clevinger, J. E. (1993)	To explore the possibility that transformative learning occurs in the experiences of kidney transplant recipients.	Concluded the following: crises do not always precipitate a transformation, a crises becomes a disorienting dilemma only when an established meaning perspective becomes dysfunctional for problem resolution, critical reflection is central to transformation, action is guided by a new perspective and problem-solving, and socio-cultural distortions can be identified as precursors, and possibly predictors of transformative learning.
Cochrane, N. J. (1981)	To explore the personal meanings of adults' recent and past withdrawal experiences.	Found affective ways of knowing, critical reflection, and the essentiality of relationships significant in transformative learning.

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APPENDIX B

Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Coffman, P. M. (1989)	To explore the patterns of acceptance and feelings of resentment to change in familiar habits of language at a theological seminary.	Suggests revisions to the model of perspective transformation: critical of three steps (2, 3, and 4); proposes a learning model that is spiral and a recursive process, recognizes the influence of experience on reflection, and the essentiality of resolving feelings prior critical reflection.
Courtenay, B.; Merriam, S. B,; and Reeves, P. M. (1998)	To understand how meaning is constructed in the lives of those diagnosed as HIV-positive.	Identified an initial reaction period, a catalytic experience that sets in motion the meaning-making process, and three distinct and interrelated phases of reflection and activity in the transformative process. Revealed a greater dimension of Mezirow's "disorienting dilemma" and "trying on new roles" phases and the significance others play in enabling people in their transformative experience.
Cusack, P. J. (1990)	To facilitate the process of a perspective transformation from a mechanistic to an organicist world view.	Purported to have initiated a perspective transformation among all participants. Offered little data for support and made no significant contribution to the understanding transformative learning theory.
D'Andrea, A. M. (1986)	To understand how reflective activities used by teachers help them learn from experience.	Found that reflection was most often triggered by unpleasant experiences, relationships provided the context for reflection and dialogue, emotions and intuition were significant in the reflective process, and readiness was a prerequisite for change and transcending nature of learning.
Dewane, C. M. (1993)	To examine the nature of adult learning in self-help groups.	Found the 10 step model provided an interpretation of the cognitive processes and outcomes associated with participation in a self-help group. Also found the model to be nonsequential and completion of each step was not contingent upon completion of previous steps.
Edwards, K. A. (1997)	To understand the learning process by which women construct and reconstruct their sexual identities in relationship to current sexual codes.	Found that a transformation does not occur necessarily as a cognitive process reliant on rational discourse, instead it is the result of a change in how participants 'restory' their lives, relying on counter narratives in relationship to dominant cultural narratives. Also identified was the significance of emotions in transformation, the importance of decontextualization, and the role of normalization of counter narratives.
Elias, D. G. (1993)	To explore the development of social transformative leaders and ways educational programs contribute to their development.	Recognized the role of the unconscious and the irrational and believed an inordinate amount of trust had been placed in rationality in the transformative learning process. Recommendations for practice included promoting a habit of apperception and metacognition.
First, J. A., and Way, L. W. (1995)	To examine parent education outcomes by focusing on the nature of the experience.	Found transformative learning offered an overriding explanation of the nature of experience felt by the women in a parent education program.
Gallagher, C. J. (1997)	To explore drama-in-education, a highly collaborative group process, in how it contributed to changes in understanding.	Identified essential elements contributing to a change in understanding: experiential learning; creating a trusting community of learners; learner-centered approach; discussing aesthetics; necessity of time; critical reflection; and affective learning.

Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Gehrels, C. (1984)	To explore the learning process of creating meaning from experience by elementary school principals.	Identified intense feelings (disequilibrium) to be the trigger for reflection, recognized the importance of relationships, and found compassion and change in feelings as outcomes of a perspective transformation.
Group for Collaborative Inquiry (1994)	To reconceptualize transformative learning and social action, and recognizing learning-in-relationships and whole person learning.	Found the transformation process to be facilitated by relationships with others and involved whole person learning (cognitive, affective, somatic, intuitive, and spiritual).
Harper, L. A. A. (1994)	To explore the change process associated with international migration.	Found transformative learning offered a model for learning a new culture, the essentiality of relationships and critical reflection to the learning process, and the definition of a perspective transformation to include cognitive flexibility.
Holt, M. E. (1994)	To replicate the work of Taylor (1993) with subjects of a different primary culture.	Found transformative learning offered a model for learning a new culture, the essentiality of readiness for transformative learning, the significance of relationships, and the outcome of intercultural competency as an indicator of a perspective transformation.
Hunter, E. K. (1980)	To explore the learning process of people who radically changed their nutritional beliefs and practices.	Identified a state of readiness for transformative learning, the significance of relationships, the affective nature of change, the essentiality of faith, and broadened the definition of a perspective transformation to include self-responsibility, spiritual growth, and acceptance of death
Kaminsky, A. L. (1997)	To understand the meanings of and relationships between voice, action, empowerment, and knowledge, essential to collaborative inquiry and transformative learning	Identifies several problems with Mezirow's ideal conditions of rational discourse; such as the inability of participants to engage in decision making as equals; the necessity to resolve emotional issues first; and the time consuming nature of striving for consensus. Furthermore, she identified the essentiality of collaboration, cooperative inquiry, "voice as conversation," and the use of power to ensure that the important elements of learning community are maintained and in place.
Kennedy, G. (1994)	To develop descriptive models of a cross-cultural sojourner's transformational learning process.	Found transformative learning to be dependent on ego development and found no relationship between personality types, learning styles, and transformational experiences. Also found that transformative learning occurs regardless of reason or length of stay in the host culture.
Kroupa, E. L. (1996)	To explore the experiential learning process of 10 traumatically brain-injured adults	Found transformative learning indicative of a more complex view of self and the world and the essentiality of critical reflection. The path of transformation proceeds "from disjuncture, assimilation, critical reflection, differentiation or transcendence, and then moves through accommodation, and integration" (p. 191).
Laswell, T. D. (1994)	To investigate the nature of job loss and related experiences of change and development.	Found meaning perspectives revised due to job loss. Significant to revision is disorienting dilemma, incidental learning, and critical reflection. Found the process to be recursive instead of step-wise and identifies "flashbacks" of self-doubt, anger, and depression many years after the discharge.

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Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Lucas, L. L. (1994)	To explore the role of courage in transformative learning.	Identified the themes of identity (courage to be), emotion (courage to feel), spirituality (courage to believe), and action (courage to do) integral to the process of transformative learning. Identified environmental factors (context, significant others, resources) as having an impact on transformative learning.
Ludwig, G. D. (1994).	To develop a training manual that uses transformative learning principles to evaluate the educational components of Job Training Partnership Act training program proposals.	Identified caring and sharing by instructional staff as the most significant elements in training programs that facilitate transformative learning. Developed a practical set of guidelines that evaluate the transformative learning educational components of training program proposals.
Lytle, J. E. (1989)	To explore the extent nurses (RN) returning to school for a BSN experienced the 10-step process of a perspective transformation	Found the 10-step process to be valid, less than a majority of participants experienced all the steps, with most stalling in the process at critical reflection or the action phase. The quantitative portion of the study revealed no significant findings.
Matusicky, C. A. (1982)	To develop an instructional model for training family life educators.	Developed a learning environment model for adults in family life education to examine their perceptual field and provide an opportunity for a perspective transformation.
Morgan, J. H. (1987)	To explore the nature of the transition from homemaker to independent person, who were displaced by separation or divorce.	Found the transition process to closely parallel the phases of a perspective transformation. Identified a back and forth process of transition through stages, the significance of external support, intimate friendships, internal factors (determination, adaptability, positive attitude, and faith, previous experience with crisis), the essentiality of resolving anger before critical reflection can begin, and modeling.
Neuman, T. P. (1996)	To explore critically reflective learning, its developmental nature, the influence of affect, and in relationship to transformative learning.	Found critical reflective learning to be developmental, beginning with a reflective capacity and then a subsequent Critical Reflective Capacity for engaging in critical self-reflection and more deliberate learning. Developing Critical Reflective Capacity involved a conceptual perspective transformation indicative of a holistic mix of affective, cognitive, and experiential type of learning. Also identified a number of essential reflective strategies, such as writing and solitude.
Olson, G., and Kleine, P. (1993)	To explore the relationship of trigger events, perspective transformation, and learning among of rural midlife college students.	Found perspective transformation to be impeded by possible cultural alienation and the perception (positive/negative) of triggering events (disorienting dilemma) influenced the degree of personal change.

Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Pierce, G. (1986)	To identify managerial perspectives that are discrepant with the values of the emergent paradigm and the factors that facilitate transformative learning.	Found a change in one's perspective resulted in an increase in power, internal control, a sense of connectedness to others, an appreciation of the affective dimension, acceptance and understanding of oneself and others extending beyond the rational to the affective, and spiritual consciousness. Also identified factors that facilitate transformative learning.
Pope, S. M. (1996).	To explore the impact of higher education among ethnically diverse working class women first in their families to graduate from college.	Found transformative learning to be a long-term, chaotic, and contextual process. Perspective transformations unfolded over time due to a gradual accumulation of personal power and supportive relationships and not triggered by a disorienting dilemma.
Saavedra, E. R. (1995)	To explore the process of teacher transformation during social interactions between teachers within a cohesive and sustained study group context.	Found evidence of learning through existing meaning schemes, new meaning schemes, and through transformation of meaning schemes and meaning pers spectives. Identified shifts in one's discourse, realization of the interrelationship between theory and practice, critical reflection, and action as indicators of transformative learning. Found the sharing of personal narratives and a trusting environment essential to critical reflection.
Schlesinger, R. C. (1983)	To depict the process of change from Jewish women returning to the work force.	Supported the concept of readiness with a "pretransition stage," and also recognized the influence of context in the transformative learning process.
Scott, S. M. (1991a)	To explore the nature of transformation from of leaders' experience in a community organization	Identified self-confidence, empowerment, spirituality, and the transcendent source of power as outcomes. Recognized the influence of context, the significance of intuition, courage, risk, creativity, caring in the learning process. Found collective needs representing a stronger force than rationality and the importance of dialoguing with oneself in the transformative learning process.
Shurina-Egan, S. J. (1985)	To explore the learning process of adults as they experienced family therapy.	Identified disorienting dilemma as the catalyst for reflection and relationships to be important to the learning process. More complex learning occurred when affective change occurred.
Sveinunggaard K. (1993)	To develop a holistic understanding of transformative learning by exploring role of social context and affective learning.	Identified perceptual changes of a perspective transformation (sense of personal power, clearer sense of self, redefining of roles, adoption of higher order values, and development of critically reflective perspective). Found action and critical reflection dependent upon affective learning, and identified the social nature of transformative learning.
Taylor, E. W. (1993)	To investigate the learning process of intercultural competency and perspective transformation as a possible model.	Found a recursive model of learning that paralleled Mezirow's to some degree. Identified readiness, cultural disequilibrium and the affective dimension essential to the learning process. Also found perspective transformation for some not to be dependent on critical reflection.

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Author/Year	Purpose of the Study	Salient Results
Turner, T. T. (1986).	To identify how Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) developed and executed their objectives.	Offered little insight into the process of a perspective transformation, except for identifying a predisposition for change and power as an outcome of perspective transformation.
Van Nostrand, J. A. (1992)	To test a synthesized model of perspective transformation and a revelation readiness model of lifestyle change among adult female smokers and ex-smokers.	Found internal consistency and reliability in the process of a perspective transformation among the following constructs: (1) readiness (concepts of life dissatisfaction, social support, and critical analysis); (2) revelation (concepts of knowledge, mystical experience and a redefined perspective) and (3) sustained change over time.
Vogelsang, M. R. (1993)	To explore the educational experience of students in higher education and related educational activities as transformative.	Found stressful life events prior to college precipitated transformative learning. Identified differences between the transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Found that discussing alternate personal meaning perspectives in social science courses promoted transformative learning. Identified shared meaning perspectives central to female students' identity: self-concept, role of women, relationships, and religion.
Weisberger, R. D. (1995)	To explore the effects of higher education on returning working class adult male students at a community college.	Found the men experienced a perspective transformation resulting in an increase in confidence, both effectively and cognitively, and ability to connect with students across age and gender. Also, found from life histories the social, cultural, and historical context was identified as helping fashion a perspective transformation.
Whalley, T. (1995)	To develop a theory of culture learning using transformative learning as a model.	Found learning through meaning schemes and learning new meaning schemes essential to learning a new culture. Found process and premise reflection to be essential in the transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives.
Williams, G. H. (1985)	To explore the theory of perspective transformation as way of understanding and explaining what led to spouse abuse and a way of facilitating change in the abusive behavior.	Found a perspective transformation associated with change in abusive behavior, but not the most significant variable. Subjects with greater change in perspective demonstrated the least abusive behavior and the greatest increase in reasoning tactics. Role preference (modern/ egalitarian) was not significant with a perspective transformation. A follow-up study indicated a slight regression among most variables.

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ABSTRACT

The test for today's economy is to create a workforce development system that capitalizes on current opportunities across states, regions, and local communities. The economic environment is positive, with tight, dynamic, and global labor markets. The business need for job-ready, entry-level workers; high-skilled workers; and workers who can continue to learn fuels a commitment to workforce development. One approach is business-led, regional workforce development coalitions. Changing patterns for finding work and advancing in careers have created incentives for new approaches to improving local labor markets in which job seekers have identifiable routes for employment access and advancement, and employers can find qualified workers effectively and efficiently. Workforce development is emerging as the central strategy for creating new opportunities for companies and individuals and a key factor in regional economic development activity. Business-led workforce coalitions are surfacing as viable mechanisms for developing effective regional workforce development systems. They are as diverse as the issues on which they focus: geography, industries, individuals/groups, economic development, labor market dynamics, and education reform. Three broad activity areas are policy and advocacy, planning and research, and technical assistance. Steps to ensure the creation of a successful regional coalition are as follows: join forces, define the problem, design the solution, implement the solution, evaluate effectiveness, and sustain the collaboration. (Contains 14 references) (YLB)

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ED 423 423

Business-Led Coalitions: Aligning Supply and Demand in Workforce Development

Workforce Brief #9

National Alliance of Business

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NATIONAL WORKFORCE ASSISTANCE COLLABORATIVE

WORKFORCE BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS

Business-Led Coalitions: Aligning Supply and Demand in Workforce Development

Introduction

Globalization, technology, and shifting demographics have produced an economic environment of accelerating change in which entire industries are being created and destroyed on almost a daily basis. While many companies and individuals have benefitted from the changes that surround us, there are substantial segments of the American workforce for whom these changes have meant professional uncertainty, financial instability, and increased familial stress. The challenge is to ensure that *all* Americans can take advantage of the opportunities in the new economy.

This challenge has direct implications for local workforce development policies and practices. Businesses will only grow and prosper in communities that provide them with an accessible, skilled workforce, capable of competing both nationally and internationally. There is a growing recognition in communities across America that the workforce development infrastructure is a critical component of economic competitiveness. More important is the increasing realization that the traditional supply-side model that invests in education or links individuals to training is no longer adequate. The new economy requires a market-driven approach that aligns business demands, individual opportunity, and educational services.

Creating a workforce development system that is in tune with the new economic environment requires significant transformations in individuals, education and training providers, business, and public policy. There is, at this juncture, a unique opportunity for success. The economic environment is positive, with tight, dynamic, and global labor markets. The business need for job-ready, entry-level workers, workers with high skills, and workers who can continue to learn fuels a commitment to workforce development. Workers who are able to take responsibility for managing their careers have new and unparalleled opportunities. The test is to create a workforce development system that will capitalize on these opportunities across states, regions, and local communities.

This Workforce Brief will explore one approach to meeting this test: business-led, regional workforce development coalitions. This brief examines how:

- ❑ Constant change is creating a new economic environment with fresh labor market dynamics.
- ❑ Workforce development is emerging as the central strategy for creating new opportunities for companies and individuals. It is also becoming a key factor in regional economic development activity.
- ❑ Business-led workforce coalitions are surfacing as viable mechanisms for developing effective regional workforce development systems. These coalitions are as diverse as the issues on which they focus.
- ❑ Successful coalitions require collaboration. There are a number of specific steps to take to ensure the creation of a successful regional coalition.

Changing Labor Market Dynamics

The most significant feature about the global economy of the 1990s is how the combination of globalization, advances in technology, and shifting demographics have radically altered the foundation of the U.S. economy. As a consequence, the criteria for success in the marketplace, the organizational structures and management practices of businesses, and the skills required to secure and sustain employment also are changing. Moreover, change continues at an accelerating pace. Effective organizations undergo constant transformation to fit within their changing environment, while workers must constantly alter their skill sets to meet emerging requirements for successful performance.

As the pace of change has accelerated, the pace of "creative destruction" has quickened as well. Capitalism inevitably tears down even as it builds anew. So it is that the U.S. economy has generated rising incomes and new opportunities while destroying some jobs, and has developed entirely new industries, such as computer hardware and software, while destroying some industries. Between 1979 and 1995, the U.S. economy destroyed 43 million jobs. During the same period, however, the economy created almost 70 million new jobs. These changes are part of a long-term, structural transition; they are a permanent feature of the economy now and into the foreseeable future.

A fresh set of labor market dynamics are associated with the new economic environment. More and more frequently, it is the workforce that enables a company to improve productivity and create value in the marketplace, and serves as the foundation of competitive advantage. A recent study conducted by Lisa Lynch and Sandra Black, for example, showed that a ten percent increase

in the education level of a company's workforce (approximately one year of additional education) increased productivity by 8.6 percent in the manufacturing sector and by 12.9 percent in the non-manufacturing sector. (In contrast, a comparable increase in capital equipment increased productivity by 2.6 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively.)

Skills and Company Competitiveness

In today's global economic environment, companies are placing greater importance on the skills of their workforce as a critical part of their efforts to gain a competitive edge.

- A recent Coopers & Lybrand survey found that the number of companies reporting skill shortages as a barrier to growth has jumped one-third in the last year, from 47 percent in 1996 to 63 percent in 1997.
- The 1998 Olsten Staffing Strategies Survey revealed that nearly 57% of respondents expect to be understaffed in 1998, up from 45% last year, and almost 70% said the major cause of understaffing is lack of qualified applicants.

As knowledge and skills become the core drivers of business success, companies are developing new ways to plan, manage, and deliver these to the workplace. New strategies and tactics are being designed and implemented to capitalize on the creativity, commitment, and effort of employees, while maintaining and preserving the flexibility companies need to adjust the size and skills of their workforce on a continuous basis. These new strategies and tactics are specifically designed for an environment in which the change facing companies shows constantly increasing volume (number of changes), momentum (pace and time to respond), and complexity (interrelatedness of changes).

Previously successful workforce strategies are not suited to the new economic environment; change is too fast and constant. For example, the inflexibility of the internal labor market has been replaced by a greater reliance on external labor markets for new employees. At low skill levels, employers have increased their reliance on part-time and temporary employees. At higher skill levels, employers are hiring more from outside the firm or using project-based contract employees. Similarly, long-term tenure and opportunities for wage and career advancement through internal career ladders have been weakened or eliminated by the flatter job hierarchies resulting from restructuring and increased outsourcing of non-critical functions. While the breadth of job tasks, employee autonomy, and lateral mobility within firms may be growing, upward mobility within firms is increasingly constrained.

Workers can take advantage of significant new opportunities in companies and industries that are undergoing transformation and realignment. Workers seeking new career or occupational paths can escape from dead-end jobs, declining companies, and depressed industries and move into jobs, companies, and industries with significant growth opportunities. Rather than diminishing job security, security can be enhanced as companies and employees constantly reconfigure and reinvent themselves – *if* workers meet the increased skill requirements emerging across all types of occupations. "Winners" will necessarily become more self-reliant, taking the initiative to grow their skills to improve their job value and marketability. They will assume most of the responsibility for managing the effects of workplace change on their lives and careers.

Not all workers have access to the opportunities and rewards of increased skill development. Those with more education and better skills are more likely to work in workplaces where they can further develop their skills and gain even more training on the job. Those with one to three years of post-secondary education are 40 percent more likely – and baccalaureate degree holders are twice as likely – to be retrained on the job.

Just as those with skills get more training, there is reason to believe that those with skills have more career opportunity. More skill is not only necessary to get a job, but to keep one as well. Thus, low-skill workers are the "losers" in the new economy. They are generally unprepared to deal with the changes and, lacking a vision of new career options as well as opportunities for pursuing additional education and training, will be left behind by workplace change – either in low-wage, dead-end jobs, or unemployed.

An effective labor market meets the needs of both job seekers and employers. It provides job seekers with identifiable routes for accessing employment and advancing in a chosen occupation or career, and it enables employers to find *qualified* workers effectively and efficiently. With *effective* job matching, employers are spared the costs of remedial training or frequent employee turnover. With *efficient* job matching, they are spared excessive recruitment costs.

Changing patterns for finding work and advancing in careers have created incentives for new approaches to improving local labor markets. To be effective, these new approaches must meet the needs of all players, providing "win-win" conditions for employers, workers, job seekers, and other local institutions.

Regional Workforce Development

Both corporate and individual success depend on increases in knowledge and skills, increases that can only be met via education and training. This means that the organizations that educate and train current and future workers have a direct and particularly important effect on a firm's competitiveness, a worker's ability to take advantage of labor market opportunities, and a community's economic development prospects.

Corporate, individual, and community prosperity depend upon attaining and maintaining alignment between business skill demands, individuals' opportunities for skill attainment, and the availability of educational services. An aligned, reliable employment and workforce development system would provide business with skilled workers to meet the needs of a changing workplace, help individuals make decisions about their own skill development needs, and enable education and training providers to graduate students whose competencies match the needs of employers. Achieving this alignment is no easy task.

In the past, public employment and training programs viewed *individuals* as their primary customers. As a consequence, they supported and reinforced a supply-driven workforce development system. Program dollars focused on linking students to education and training providers, with little or no attention given to labor demand or employers' needs. This is evidenced by the existing compartmentalization of education and training streams (vocational education, K-12, community college, university) and the frequent focus of education and training on separate population groups (welfare recipients, in-school youth, out of school youth, and dislocated workers). In the new economic environment, instead of the government being the driver of education and training services through broad based training programs, the drivers will be employers.

Dona Ana (New Mexico) Workforce Action Council

The Dona Ana Workforce Action Council (DAWAC) is committed to developing a proactive workforce policy that can be replicated or expanded throughout the region. The Council's mission is to bring together business, government, education, labor and the community to collaborate and to invest in the community's future by linking education and training to the workplace of today and of the future. The goals of DAWAC include:

- ❑ To integrate and improve the education, training and employment delivery systems of Dona Ana County;
- ❑ To ensure that academic and career education programs provide the necessary skills for successful employment and life-long learning;
- ❑ To articulate and implement workforce development policies that support economic development strategies within the region;
- ❑ To promote collaboration between business and the educational and vocational training systems;
- ❑ To serve as a resource to help local businesses stay competitive by identifying workforce training needs and coordinating training resources; and
- ❑ To link workforce preparation programs to economic development strategies.

As businesses become more knowledgeable about the new economy with its global competition, ever tighter margins, and changing skill and labor requirements, they are forming new alliances and partnerships, in fact, whole new relationships, with education providers. Individual companies are establishing strategic partnerships with preferred education and training providers to better address their innovation and workforce needs.

These relationships directly benefit a firm's current and future employees, as well as its strategic partners, but not necessarily those outside of the organization or the general public. Such partnerships determine which education and training providers will serve as the "suppliers" of skilled workers. The challenge facing the public sector is determining what policies and practices are needed to provide disadvantaged, unemployed, and dislocated individuals access to these providers.

In this context, meeting the needs of diverse employers for qualified workers can be a key competitive advantage for a region or community. PHH Fantus Consulting notes that the "trainability" of a region's workforce and the infrastructure to deliver training and education are crucial features of local economic competitiveness and ones that more companies are using to judge workforce quality. A report from the National League of Cities observed, "a community's capacity to provide a continuum of learning opportunities ... may well be the critical determining factor in local economic growth in the years ahead." How communities implement workforce development programs and policies, invest limited resources, and arrange service delivery to continually improve workforce skills will determine whether they are winners or losers in the new economic environment.

Intel

Two years ahead of opening a new plant in Fort Worth, Texas, Intel is laying the groundwork to prepare a substantial pool of job-ready applicants. It convinced a group of high-tech companies, including Texas Instruments, National Semiconductor, and Hitachi, to form a partnership to build a pool of qualified workers from which they all can benefit. The consortia also obtained buy-in from 15 technical and community colleges in the region to support a customized technical program.

Business-Led Workforce Coalitions

Leading companies are doing whatever it takes to get the right people (people with the appropriate knowledge and skills), at the right time, in the right place. While few companies have the resources or inclination to take on the challenge of building a workforce development system alone, many companies have joined together to build effective and efficient local and regional employment and training systems. These workforce coalitions set action-oriented agendas, and take critical and active roles in directing their community's employment and training strategies. They work with educators, government, and other community stakeholders to put the fundamental components of a competitive workforce system in place. These coalitions are viable mechanisms for aligning and coordinating both the supply side and the demand side of workforce development.

Kansas, Inc.

Kansas, Inc's mission is to build a strong, diversified economy that promotes new and existing industries. To this end, Kansas, Inc. works to ensure all its residents have the education and skills necessary for meaningful long-term employment. Kansas, Inc.:

- ❑ Creates a positive, competitive business climate that encourages investment and growth.
- ❑ Prepares Kansas youth for the workplace and life-long learning.
- ❑ Provides high quality workforce training and life-long learning opportunities to adults.
- ❑ Maintains and improves public and private infrastructure essential for growth and development.
- ❑ Sustains and enhances economic development capacity.

In an effort to encourage business leadership in regional, state, and local workforce development coalitions, the National Alliance of Business examined the issues confronting local workforce development coalitions. Some of the more intriguing findings emerging from this research follow.

- ❑ **There are many different types of coalitions.** There is no one best way to organize a business-led coalition; the different approaches taken in individual cases present a range of alternatives. Depending on the community, existing entities (e.g., local chambers of commerce, private industry councils or workforce development boards, regional and local industry organizations) may be at the heart of the coalition, a part of it, or not a player at all.
- ❑ **Coalitions are formed to address some targeted need.** The primary criteria for targeting helps define a coalition's "primacy of purpose." A number of different criteria can be observed:
  - ➤ **Geography.** Regional coalitions, by definition, target specific geographic areas. But the size of the region may vary, and may not correspond to political boundaries. Thus, coalitions may represent broad, multi-state economic regions, states, cities or localities, or even neighborhoods.
  - ➤ **Industries.** Industrial coalitions target industry clusters or promote industry networks and learning consortia to enhance industry and firm competitiveness. The identification of industry clusters and the development of industry networks help channel resources and services to an industry's workforce. Industry associations often exercise leadership in the development of coalitions targeting specific industries.

Some coalitions may adopt a different method of classification in selecting companies to assist, e.g., a coalition may be formed to address the special needs of small and mid-sized companies.

- **Individuals/groups.** Some coalitions may be formed to address the needs of specific individuals or groups in a community. This would include, for example, coalitions formed to address the needs of the disadvantaged, at-risk youth, immigrants, disabled, or dislocated workers. These coalitions recognize that ability of all individuals to participate actively in the labor market enhances the community's economic vitality.
- **Issues.** Issue coalitions are frequently formed to address such issues as economic development, labor market dynamics, and education reform.

Economic development: Economic development programs have traditionally focused on attracting new business to an area, improving infrastructure, and/or providing incentives to businesses to remain in the area, and many coalitions concentrate on these customary services as well. In the new economic environment, however, many coalitions are moving beyond traditional economic development to such issues as transforming current and new businesses into high performance workplaces and developing a skilled workforce. More and more coalitions have emphasized workforce preparation and development as a key piece of any systemic economic development strategy.

Right Place Program

Right Place Program (RPP) is the economic development arm of the Grand Rapids chamber of commerce. Its customer-driven programs have pushed the envelope of community economic development. RPP was started in 1985 as a traditional economic development program. Its main purpose was to attract, retain, and expand businesses in the Grand Rapids Michigan area. Over time, RPP has evolved to offer companies a rich mix of services, including continuous improvement user groups (CIUGs), and organizational development and training. RPP's four major operating objectives are to

- Function under leadership from the private sector in order to develop optimal relationships.
- Develop organizations' capacity to use knowledge for improvement and innovation.
- Develop the workforce's knowledge, behavior, and skills, and
- Integrate knowledge, services, and relationships to address business' needs.

Labor market dynamics: In the new economic environment, employment relationships are more tenuous, individual mobility is higher, and career ladders are less obvious than in the past. Many coalitions work to create an efficient and equitable regional labor market in tune with these new dynamics. These coalitions endeavor to develop a system that provides individuals with accurate and easily available information about local job openings, opportunities for training, and the skills and experience needed to advance from one job to another. The coalitions also provide employers with accurate information about job seekers and their skills, and training providers and their quality, as well as facilitate effective applicant screening and job matching.

Education reform: Many coalitions are formed to help education and training providers at all levels – K-12, community college, university, and continuing education – better meet the needs of employers. While there isn't a shortage of education and training providers, there may be a shortage of high quality providers, that is, providers responsive to the workforce and workplace needs of employers. Coalitions are working with public school systems to define academic needs in the workplace, and translate these needs into rigorous academic standards and applied curriculum. They are encouraging their business members to ask for school transcripts as a part of the hiring process. Coalitions are also helping schools use the Malcolm Baldridge quality standards to build the capacity for continuous improvement into the public school system.

Leading companies are aggressively adopting new strategies (e.g., electronic performance support systems, computer-based training, web-based training, skill standards) that are the keys to quantum improvements in the cost, speed, and quality of education and training services. But educational institutions are generally behind the curve. Educational systems are still, by and large, working within traditional models (e.g., credit based on seat time, vertical career pathways, long-term career training), while the marketplace is demanding modularized, skill-based approaches. Coalitions work with education and training providers to design and deliver services in tune with the demands of the marketplace.

Maryland Business Roundtable

The Maryland Business Roundtable (MBRT) is a coalition of 80 Maryland businesses working with the governor, the state superintendent of schools, educators, parents, and community members. MBRT has played a vital role in bringing together various stakeholders who talk and listen to each other, abandon turf issues and reach consensus, all in an effort to prepare students for the world of work. MBRT has:

- Collaborated with Maryland's Department of Education to incorporate skills for success into higher academic standards.
- Helped conduct focus groups with high school principals, teachers, and parents to discuss higher standards and more stringent graduation requirements.
- Planned a public engagement campaign to make sure people around the state are aware of the need for more rigorous graduation requirements.
- Developed a state-wide plan for teacher professional development.
- Designed a model for school-based decision-making.
- Developed and helped implement the Maryland Plan for Technology in Education.

MBRT also provides business partners to schools and corporate training to educators.

It is important to recognize that a single coalition may target multiple needs. A coalition may focus on a specific industry within a specific geographic area. Similarly, a coalition serving a particular industry may focus on the economic development of the region.

- **Coalitions engage in a variety of activities.** The targeting decision discussed above helps focus a coalition. Additional focus emerges from decisions about what type of activities to undertake. Strategically, coalitions need to decide what they will do and what they will not do. Three broad activity areas can be identified: policy and advocacy, planning and research, and technical assistance.

- **Policy and advocacy.** Many coalitions engage in policy and advocacy activities in an effort to bring employment and workforce development policies in line with new economic realities. These coalitions may promote new policies and/or the elimination of existing policies and programs.
- **Planning and research.** Coalitions are often instrumental in developing regional strategic plans for workforce development. Business-led coalitions are particularly effective in convening the multiple constituencies and organizations that must be included in the development of a regional strategic plan. As part of, or independent of this planning effort, coalitions may engage in research to clarify the status of the existing regional workforce development system or to identify best practices in regional workforce development.
- **Technical assistance.** Coalitions may direct workforce development services. A coalition may broker or subcontract services if it does not have the internal capacity to provide technical assistance itself.

These three activity areas are not mutually exclusive. A coalition may engage in more than one of these activities simultaneously or sequentially. Most coalitions, however, have a single, demonstrated competency or preferred activity area; as a consequence, few coalitions can meet all the needs of the entire community.

- **A region can have multiple coalitions.** An effective workforce development system must meet the needs of multiple constituencies. This is a difficult challenge. Private sector companies have found that alliances and partnerships with other firms, even competitors, are wise strategic choices in today's competitive environment. This same lesson applies to coalitions: alliances and partnerships are a good way to address a community's workforce development needs.

  Some communities have developed collaborative models where a variety of employer-led groups leverage their individual expertise. These coalitions must align and coordinate their efforts in order to build an effective workforce development system. While there is no preordained outcome of what this partnership will look like, it must occur if there is to be a comprehensive workforce development system.
- **Coalitions have some common needs.** The nature of a coalition's activity will be determined by the character of the region or community in which it is located (e.g., economic conditions, business mix, workforce skills, education and training providers, non-profit organizations). Despite their unique situations, coalitions have some common needs. The three highest priority issues for workforce coalitions throughout the country, both at present and in the future, are: 1) coordinating workforce and economic development, 2) easing the school-to-work transition, and 3) addressing skilled worker shortages. Employee turnover in local firms and unskilled worker shortages are likely to emerge as high priority issues in the future. Other priority issues include work-based learning, performance-based funding, skill standards, one-stop centers, and curriculum development.
- **Coalitions need information.** For coalitions to succeed, they need information on best practices (i.e., what has worked for other coalitions), as well as specific strategies appropriate for different economic and labor market conditions. Coalition leaders agree that benchmarking best practices is the activity or service that would be of most value to them in addressing their workforce development challenges. Other information workforce coalitions want includes skill standards data and information, labor market data by region, and updated lists of industry/occupation associations that have developed skill standards for entry level workers.

The Greater Cleveland Growth Association

The Greater Cleveland Growth Association launched its Jobs and Workforce Initiative (JWFI) to help build a world-class regional labor force in northeast Ohio that meets current and future employer needs, supports economic growth, and broadens work opportunities for all area residents. The JWFI has chosen to focus initially on recommendations that address the most pressing of the region's fundamental problems. These recommendations are grouped into six areas:

- Creating a regional system of one-stop job linkage centers,
- Establishing a permanent regional workforce forum,
- Supporting educational improvement efforts,
- Replicating the Center for Employment Training model,
- Developing better systems for financing workforce development, and
- Ensuring that training and workforce preparation efforts are monitored, evaluated, adaptable, and accountable.

Steps to Success

Building a workforce development coalition is a collaborative process. The true value of collaboration has to do with creating different relationships, shaping different program areas, and drawing different conclusions from the same circumstances. Collaboration, in essence, is about thinking and acting differently.

While business leaders agree with the coalition approach, effective implementation is difficult. Many nascent coalitions either lack sufficient capacity or the time to pursue a structured community partnership. Successful efforts depend upon such basic building blocks as trust, shared vision, and the commitment to make it work. They also attend to the *mechanics* of how to structure a collaborative process, such as whom to invite, and what the agenda will be, etc.

Knowing the elements common to effective collaborations can help other business, education, and community leaders in their efforts to build a workforce development coalition. These common elements are:

- **Join Forces.** Collaboration begins when someone or some group decides to act. At that point, there are two things that must happen for collaboration to proceed: the right people must become involved and all participants must commit to collective effort. Partnerships achieve their maximum potential when the right mix of people from many organizations is involved. When recruiting members, it is best to look for people who will bring clout, commitment, and diversity to the table. Selecting the right people provides a core leadership team with credibility and legitimacy in the community.
- **Define the Problem.** Once the partners have committed to work together, they must define the problem they want to address. Conducting a community assessment establishes a base of common knowledge, which enables the collaboration to focus a common issue. Analysis of the assessment data to find mismatches

between skill needs and skills available, inadequacies in education and training services, and problems in the operation of the labor market provides the coalition with a foundation for defining a shared vision. Once established, the vision must be communicated widely within the community.

✔ **Design the Solution.** A vision and problem analysis serve as the foundation for the development of a strategic plan. A good plan is at the heart of a successful collaboration. The plan's goals should be realistic and sensitive to all partners' individual objectives in order to produce a genuine understanding among partners. An effective, long-range strategic plan concentrates the resources available to the coalition on mutually determined, measurable outcomes. It provides the various partners in the coalition with a clear mission to guide their own initiatives and activities.

✔ **Implement the Solution.** The purpose of planning is to produce results, not plans. Effective implementation – action – is the key to producing results. Successful implementation requires that all partners, individually or together as part of the coalition,

- Commit to active participation and involvement during implementation,
- Provide sufficient resources (financial, human, and other) to follow through on the vision and operating plan,
- Agree to organizational structures and mechanisms to coordinate implementation and maintain good communications among all parties,
- Establish mechanisms to monitor implementation, evaluate progress, and revise the plan, as needed, to meet objectives, and
- Recognize and celebrate achievement of partnership objectives.

✔ **Evaluate Effectiveness.** Every collaborative needs a way to determine progress and success. An effective evaluation system assesses individual programs or tactics in the strategic plan, the partnership strategy itself, and overall community improvement. Evaluation results provide coalitions with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and make needed revisions in their programs. An evaluation can be simple when the evaluation goals are clear and when the planning and execution rely as much as possible on the input of stakeholders and existing data sources.

✔ **Sustain the Collaboration.** Collaboratives need to be cultivated and maintained. Time and effort should be devoted to preparing for the inevitable changes that will result over the life of a partnership. Specific strategies should be developed to build the management capacities necessary to sustain the effort, particularly through leadership transitions.

As business performance has become increasingly interconnected with education and training policies, new program delivery models that defy categorization as "public" or "private" have emerged. Business-led, regional workforce coalitions exemplify these new models. These coalitions are concerned about the quality and competence of the American workforce, and have developed effective strategies for addressing their concerns. Through collective action, they connect jobseekers with training, resources, and employers – and meet employers' needs at the same time. The new partnership models and more flexible, creative solutions being invented by business-led workforce coalitions can help achieve an aligned, reliable employment and workforce development system.

Resources

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